The New Industry Weekly

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MCV The Market for Home Computing & Video Games

GTI could ditch open distribution and sign exclusive format deals

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How can a studio keep its staff these days? We ask Jeremy Smith

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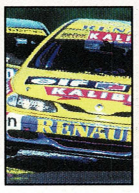

Cannibal or Cash Cow? MCV analyses the Platinum effect

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Sony out to kill £199 Sega

Official PlayStation 2 announcement due one week before Dreamcast finally goes live in Japan

JUST AS SEGA starts to go public with its Dreamcast plan, so MCV has discovered how Sony will attempt to steal its thunder with PlayStation 2.

Sega began talking officially about its launchplan for the new console at its New Challenge conference last week - held just ahead of the machine's public debut at the Tokyo Games Show.

It was revealed that the machine will retail at Y29,800 when it hits Japanese shops on November 27th - which is equivalent to a $220 US price and, given standard pound-for-dollar marketing tactics in the games business, £199 in the UK.

Five titles will be available with the Dreamcast at launch - namely Godzilla Generations, Virtua Fighter 3, Sega Rally 2, Sonic's Adventure and Incoming.

These form part of a 45-title catalogue of products under development which also includes potential blockbuster Bio Hazard Code Veronica (based on Resident Evil) and several as yet undetailed projects from Namco - so long a devout PlayStation follower.

The Dreamcast will ship with a modem in Japan, and probably the US too, and email software called Dream Flyer. But no decision has been made for Europe just yet - and depends on cost as much as consumer interest.

Sony, meanwhile, has refused to rise to the bait at the Tokyo Game Show and make any official comment about its own PlayStation 2 project.

Instead, the video games market leader will look to leave Dreamcast still-born by talking about its new console a week before Sega's launch in its domestic market.

Sony will reveal that the next PlayStation features a custom-built CPU, DVD and a 3D processor capable of delivering 10 million polygons per second.

It will not be backwards-compatible, as some parts of the retail trade had hoped, but it will provide the 'quantum technological leap' required by any system hoping to succeed a console that has already shipped an astonishing 40 million units.

It will also be shown in some fashion at next spring's Tokyo Game Show.

'Vultures' attacked

THE RISING NUMBER of indie studios is largely being driven by greed rather than creativity and could easily lead to disaster.

That's the warning from Jeremy Smith, himself a product of 'splintering' - having quit Gremlin in the '80s to set up Core Design.

Whilst agreeing that it can be in the interests of individuals and the industry for young teams to emerge, Smith is worried that too many are being set up without the proper commercial safeguards being put into place or any consideration of experience.

In a frank interview (see page 12), Smith tells MCV this week that it is those who specialise in pulling talent away from their current employers who are the greediest of all - as they are often helping to set up companies that have little chance of real success.

"These vultures of the business that scour companies, they just want punching in the mouth. They should create their own talent," Smith says angrily.

Our Price ditches PC

Nintendo 64 squeezes in as consoles mean cash for music chain

JUST A YEAR after introducing the format, the Our Price retail chain has completely dropped PC CD-ROM in favour of N64.

The High Street entertainment retailer currently boasts games departments in over 220 of its stores nationwide and, until now, has featured Top 10 titles on PlayStation and PC CD-ROM, along with a third section devoted to special offers.

The new strategy will see a switch to Top 10 PlayStation titles, key Platinum releases and the Top five N64 titles. This also heralds Our Price's first major push on the Nintendo format - previously only a handful of the larger stores stocked titles for the console.

"It is not necessarily the fact that PC CD-ROM has been under-performing, but rather that console - and particularly PlayStation - has been doing so well that has led us to make this decision," offered an Our Price spokesman.

"We have a limited amount of space in the Our Price stores and we have to maximise sales."

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN TO PLAY GOD

Be the most influential member of the Roman Empire by expert "resource management" or by charming the Emperor for power and promotion.

"A beautiful intense craftsman - built and totally absorbing city building game which will burn up hours of play in the blink of an eye —"
Ultimate PC 91%

"The Animated sequences are delightful"
"Caesar III looks likely to build a bigger empire than the last"
PC Gaming World

"Caesar III is more realistic with far more variety of gameplay than Caesar II"
PC Zone

CAESAR III™

THE EPIC GAME OF EMPIRE BUILDING

http://www.sierra-online.co.uk

SIERRA

Minimum system requirements: Windows 95, Pentium 166, 16MB RAM, SVGA card, 4x CD ROM Drive, Windows compatible soundcard. (Supports 3DFX)

Impressions

All change for Megastores

Management re-structure will mean energetic software push by newly-autonomous Virgin chain

A GREATER COMMITMENT to interactive entertainment is being promised by the Virgin Megastores chain following a major restructure across the company.

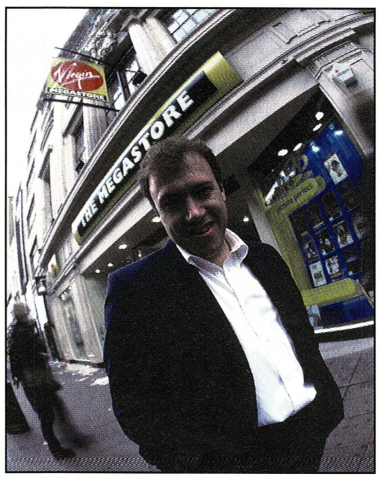
The news comes as the Virgin and Our Price chains look for greater autonomy from each other following the sale of the two brands to the Branson empire earlier this year.

The two retail brands will now boast separate staff, along with differing High Street propositions.

Key to the stronger focus on games within Virgin Megastores is a major restructure of its commercial, marketing and product departments.

The chain is now being headed up by the Virgin Entertainment Group's former finance director Simon Wright, who becomes managing director.

Reporting directly to Wright will be commercial director Steve Kincaid, finance/IT director Julian Ghinn and human resources and operations director Elaine Rowe.



WRIGHT: Greater focus on games promised

Meanwhile, Jim Batchelor has been appointed as head of product. He will be responsible for the team of product buyers across all product areas, including senior product manager for games and multimedia, Bart Sautnt.

"Games are a very important part of the product mix for Virgin Megastores, representing around 15 per cent of our total business" noted Wright.

"The restructure will mean an even greater emphasis on all product areas, including games, as we will have greater resources dedicated to ensuring that we have a good product offering on the High Street. If anything, our commitment to the games market will now increase.

"The games market is very buoyant at the moment and we are looking forward to another good Christmas in this area.

"There's no doubt that there is more competition on the High Street, but we are confident that we will remain one of the major retailers in this sector."

Bart Saunt added: "The changes are great news for us. More resources have been given to games, particularly within the marketing department, so there is a greater focus within our area. Overall, it should give us many more opportunities."

UK SOFTWARE REVENUES

Week ending October 3rd

	Last Week	This Week
Total Market	£12.9m	**£14.1m**
Full Price Console	£6.0m	**£6.2m**
Full Price PC	£4.5m	**£5.2m**
Budget Console	£1.6m	**£1.8m**
Budget PC	£0.7m	**£0.9m**

THIS WEEK'S TOP EARNERS

1. Tekken 3
(Namco/Sony)
PlayStation **£717,411**

2. F1 World Grand Prix
(Nintendo)
N64 **£628,443**

3. Mission Impossible
(Infogrames)
N64 **£488,118**

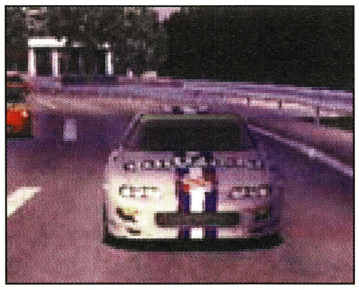
4. ISS '98
(Konami)
PlayStation/N64 **£325,519**

5. Gran Turismo
(Sony)
PlayStation **£274,574**

Source: MCV

Renault stalls Namco

RIDGE RACER may be wowing the crowds yet again in Japan this weekend, but there's no word yet on UK release - or what the latest version will actually be called.


New Ridge Racer hit by Euro trademark issues

Namco's fourth adaptation of one its most enduring game brands, entitled R4, is one of the PlayStation highlights at the Tokyo Game Show.

Pitched against the record-selling Gran Turismo, it offers no fewer than eight racing courses, an overhauled graphics engine and over 300 playable cars.

Unfortunately, R4 also sports the same name as a car being manufactured by the French giant Renault.

Sony is refusing to comment on the release date of the title until the on-going trademark issues are resolved.

The name will definitely change, and any arrival in the UK or Europe is not expected until spring at the earliest.

It's a 3D card and a Half

HALF-LIFE FINALLY hit the High Street last week - but only as part of a software bundle with Guillemot's new 3D graphics card.

The Maxi Gamer Phoenix accelerator card, which is based on 3Dfx Interactive's new Voodoo Banshee chipset, is already proving a success on the High Street. But to further bolster sales Guillemot has now introduced a new software bundle.

Along with Cendant's eagerly-awaited Half-Life, Ubi Soft's F1 Racing Simulation and Tonic Trouble Special Edition will be available with the card at the same RRP of £99.99.

"The Maxi Gamer Phoenix is already at an incredible price point," said Guillemot's UK general manager Michael Flanagan.

"With the inclusion of Half Life and these extra games, consumers are getting even greater value."

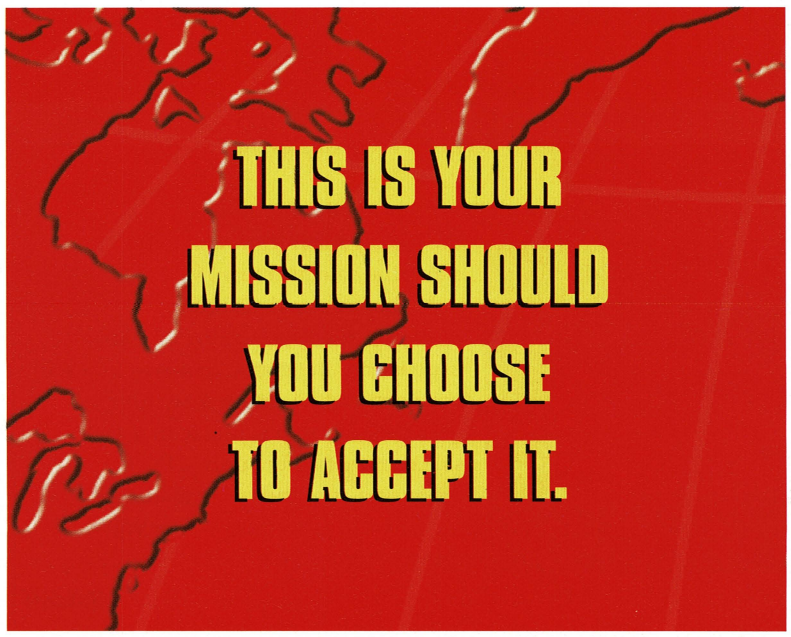
Now Nintendo sells direct

ARMCHAIR SHOPPERS are Nintendo's latest target, with the games giant having committed strong support for the forthcoming Shop! TV channel.

The £50m TV shopping channel is being set up by Littlewoods and the Granada Media Group and will start transmissions from next month via the ONdigital network and via cable stations.

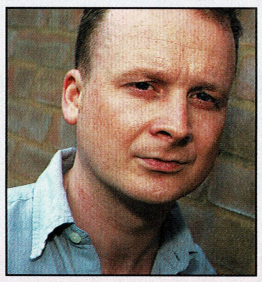
Littlewoods and Granada are hailing the new venture as the High Street on TV and already more than 30 major brands have signed up to reach a potential initial audience of some 1.5 million homes. These include Nintendo, Adidas, Levis, Black & Decker, Toshiba, Timberland and Kickers.

Shop! will be broadcast from 8.30am to 5.30pm seven days a week, with consumers able to order initially by telephone only. However, from the New Year purchases can also be made via a dedicated website.



Comment

Learning to speak PlayStation



Anyone who knows the business will tell you that some market realities are easy to see. Others have to be learned.

I met two PlayStation publishers last week, each with a tale to tell about the industry's leading format.

Both wanted to talk about the performance one should expect from a new release these days.

Indeed, Publisher A wondered why, with so many Platinum titles available, anyone would risk buying full-price. Its trade marketing manager had recently forced himself to tell a lady in EB to put down her initial expensive collection and start again at £19.99. Like I said, some market realities are easy to see - if tough to admit at times.

Publisher B later scratched its head with MCV about how people who should know better had decided that Tekken 3 had been 'hurt' by grey imports.

With UK sales to date of 100,000, it is already equal to Colin McCrae - released two months earlier - and behind only Gran Turismo and Resident Evil 2 this year.

If sales have not been as high as some expected, perhaps one should consider the £44.99 RRP. It was too high, and Sony admits it. Maybe one should also remember that this is Tekken 3 - Tekken 2 being only 18 months old and still in the Top 20, at a rather good value £19.99.

Hit by piracy during the long wait for UK release? Maybe a bit, but the only people who buy pirate games are hardcore gamers who know they need to chip their console and where to get it done. There's not that many of them in total market terms.

Grey imports? Well, how many PlayStation owners (you know, mostly normal punters) do you know who would go to the trouble of buying an NTSC machine so that they can order Japanese games?

Like I said, some market realities have to be learned. Otherwise you end up looking like a bit of a div.

Stuart Dinsey

Talking Shop

SOR points to remember

I suppose one thing all independent retailers hope and pray for is a distributor which offers full sale or return.

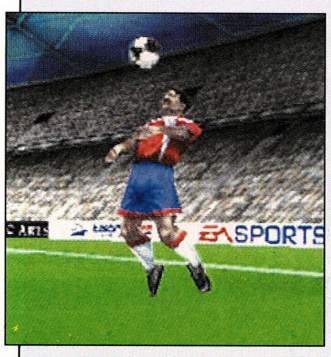
When a distributor does offer a special deal on a particular title, indies are prone to jump at the chance and over order a bit.

One distributor, Pinnacle, made such an offer with Electronic Arts' World Cup '98 release this summer and many took it up. In some cases it worked very well indeed and many retailers have reported to me that they sold through every single copy.

But others were eventually left with stock, which by now had been discounted by the distributor. Five months after release, these retailers are still waiting for their returns authorisations and for their accounts to be credited. Some of them even suspect it could be a ruse by the distributor to delay things, hoping more copies can still be sold.

If one lesson can be learned from this, it is when entering a verbal agreement with a telephone sales person, immediately fax over a confirmation of the order, detailing the terms of the offer as given by the salesman.

To make sure your fax details as much information as possible, ask the sales person from what date can you claim the sale or return, will there be any delay before the distributor acknowledges your claim, at whose expense are the goods returned and will your account be credited swiftly?



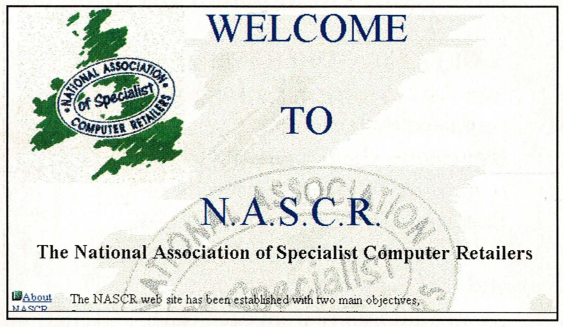
WORLD CUP '98: Good deal, but...

Failing the above, refuse to accept any sale or return offers unless the entire terms and conditions are made very clear to you in writing before you actually order the goods.

Chris Ratcliff

Indies look to NASCR event

New venue and more exhibitors planned for '99 indie show



Specialist retail body planning bigger and better exhibition for next year

ECTS IS LONG GONE, but the independent retail sector is now looking forward to its own dedicated event in spring 1999.

Indies' trade body NASCR already has two successful conferences under its belt, its latest in April this year attracting well over 200 retailers to its Derby venue.

Buoyed by the response from the trade and its members, NASCR is now lining up a higher profile event for next year.

The organisation is currently in discussions with Miller Freeman regarding the 1999 conference. The date and venue are yet to be confirmed, but NASCR is hopeful that a more permanent site can be found for the show.

At the same time, NASCR is looking to attract even more exhibitors to the event, whilst also lining up a glitzy dinner dance for the evening before the show.

"The two previous events have been very successful and now we want to offer our members - and any non-members who wish to attend - an even better conference," explained NASCR secretary Clive Bishop.

"We're currently looking for a venue. It will be in the Midlands, but we need somewhere bigger than the previous two years and somewhere we can hold the conference on a long-term basis."

Centresoft builds Euro imprint

THE LATEST Activision acquisition was picked up and placed within a new distribution 'supergroup' last week.

CD Contact Data, which boasts offices in both Belgium and Holland, is now part of the expanded Centresoft operation - as Activision remains true to its word and continues to invest as heavily in its distribution infrastructure as its content.

A share swap deal worth just under $20m has secured the deal, which has come as something of a surprise to some of Contact Data's local partners, such as GT Interactive, Nintendo and Eidos.

That said, following Centresoft's ability to trade unchanged after Activision bought the Birmingham firm last year, most suppliers would seem willing to let 'business as usual' apply.

Activision has massively increased its product portfolio over the past year, big deals being struck in just the past month with LucasArts, SouthPeak Interactive and Paramount.

But it has always been the firm's intention to have its own direct-to-retail imprint across Europe. The company now owns Centresoft in the UK, NGB in Germany and Contact Data in the Benelux territories, and more purchases could follow.

NinDin '98 looms

SONY, FUTURE, Ziff Davis and MCV are amongst the early sponsors of this year's NinDin event, which is due to drown the industry in alcohol and sausage rolls on December 15th.

Standing for 'Not the Industry Dinner', the NinDin is run alongside the official InDin every year. The last two raised over £20,000 for Amnesty International.

The 1998 event takes place at Turnmills in London EC1. Tickets are available at £50 each or £350 for 10. Call 01608 645756 or email Alison@lincolnbeasley.co.uk.

Paragon hat-trick

INDEPENDENT PUBLISHER Paragon is launching a daily online news service and two more publications.

Total Games Network will launch next week. The address is http://totalgames.net.

The new titles are PC Player and Total Games Guide to Game Boy Colour. The former provides guides for the biggest PC games. A bi-monthly priced at £4.95, it launches on November.

The other magazine is a one-off guide. Priced at £1.95, it arrives on December 3rd.

A split decision for GTI?

Longtime supporter of 'open' distribution could choose exclusive partners for different formats

GT INTERACTIVE is asking distributors to pitch for the exclusive rights to parts of its software range.

A longtime supporter of the 'open' route to retail rather than having one preferred partner, the company has become concerned that under its current system certain formats are not gaining enough focus.

No decision has been made by GTI yet, but the UK operation may look to split up its PlayStation, PC and Nintendo business.

WIGMORE: Distributors' platform allegiance can damage other lines?

"When you look at Centresoft being so close to Sony and THE so close to Nintendo, for example, you have to wonder whether our PC products suffer through those distributors," commented GTI's UK managing director Jeremy Wigmore.

"Maybe it would be better if different ranges went solely to one distributor - which is something we're looking at right now."

GTI already works closely with Centresoft, Gem, THE and is known to be having talks with exclusive-only pioneer Pinnacle Software.

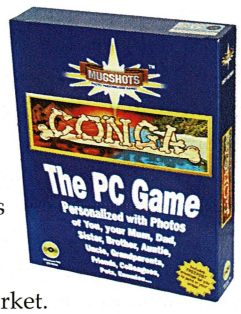
At the same time, Wigmore says that he welcomes communication with any of the up-and-coming software 'sub-distributors' who may now want to throw their hat into the ring.

With around 20 staff in total, GTI has completed the establishment of a fully-blown UK office working autonomously to the central GTI Europe. A four-strong marketing team is headed up by Michaela Blunden and a trio of sales staff are led by Mark Williams.

Key titles due between now and Christmas include Abe's Exoddus (PC and PlayStation), Duke Nukem: Time To Kill (PlayStation), War of the Worlds (PC) and Gex 2 (N64).

PC title hits photo stores

KODAK EXPRESS stores are being used by a new company with designs on the consumer software market.



ITopica's Mugshots Conga enables consumers to stick the heads of their friends and family onto game characters. Photos can be incorporated into Mugshots through a scanner or digital camera or else they can be ordered via a Freepost envelope.

Mugshots Conga is reminiscent of a 16-bit title, but ITopica's founder, Julian Brewer, stresses that cutting-edge technology isn't the issue. "There's a big market out there who are missing out on what games used to be," he said.

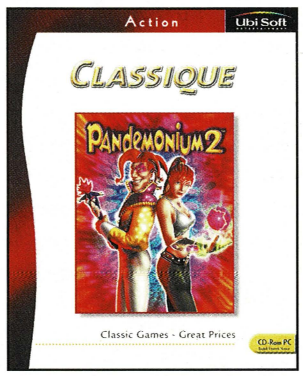
"Our strategy is to side-step the competition and create a new niche with a product that will appeal to a general audience and sell through untapped channels."

Mugshots Conga has just gone on sale in 300 Kodak Express outlets priced £29.99. ITopica is also pursuing varies retail and bundling opportunities.

Classique PC label arrives

UBI SOFT is the latest company to launch a 'collectable' low-price PC games range.

The French publisher's Classique label will be launched with 12 products positioned at two pricepoints.



New Ubi label hits retail next Friday

Premium titles, including F1 Racing Sim, Rayman, Gex and Redline Racer, are to be priced at £12.99, whilst other titles - such as Pod and Sub Culture - will hit retail at £9.99.

"I think we'd be silly to ignore the success of similar labels," said Ubi Soft's UK marketing manager Alison Turner. "This is a great opportunity for us to extend the lifecycle of our titles."

The Classique range will go on sale on October 16th.

Shearer's the one on the right

THE NEW LOVE AFFAIR with licences goes on, as Eidos becomes 'official interactive partner' of England's football team.

The deal was cemented last week with a handshake between UK head of marketing John Davis and striker Alan Shearer.

Eidos will push Michael Owen World League Soccer and Championship Manager 3 at future England matches.

Newswire

Virgin launches loyalty card

Gearing up strongly for the busy Christmas season ahead, Virgin Megastores has rolled out a loyalty scheme for PlayStation titles which offers consumers the chance to snap up a free full price title once they have bought five games at £39.99 or more.
Virgin: *0181 400 4000*

Turok blasts into TRU

An exclusive one-level demo of Acclaim's eagerly awaited Turok 2 for Nintendo 64 hits Toys R Us stores from October 18th.
Acclaim: *0171 344 5000*

Retail chain re-named

Music and Video Club has changed its name to MVC Entertainment Ltd. It was felt that the word 'club' might have confused potential customers.
MVC: *0181 424 0101*

EA scores again

Daily Net football newspaper, Football 365, has teamed up with EA to promote FA Premier League Football Manager '98.
Football 365: *0171 505 7800*

Fuel to the Fire

Fire International has set up an R&D division. Called FCD, it includes former Datel staff Mark Wallace and Wayne Beckett. Meanwhile, former Powerplay boss Richard Whipp has been appointed financial director.
Fire: *01302 325225*

Hemming coming

Interactive Ideas and CD-Rom Distribution are to handle Hemming International's budget PC lines. Prices range from £4.99-£9.99.
Hemming: *0800 358 8558*

Busted groove

Enix-developed dance video game Bust-A-Groove has been denied a PlayStation release and has subsequently been cancelled.

Thriller Killers

On-line Publishing is to release a new PC football management game called Giant Killers. It will be available early next year.
On-line: *01235 851616*

Free data guide

The Data Production Buyers Guide is out and available free.
The Data Business: *0500 666566*

Newswire

Rugrats crawl onto PC

The deal seems ages old, but Broderbund and Nickelodeon are finally bringing the popular Rugrats brand to the UK PC market next month. Aimed at six-12 year olds, Rugrats Adventure Game and Rugrats Print Shop should both go down well at retail. A looming Rugrats movie will no doubt help sales.
Broderbund: *01784 431 000*

Bill Gates booked...

Published in November by John Wiley and Sons, Bill Gates Speaks offers an unauthorised insight into the Bill Gates phenomenon. Articles, speeches, interviews and statements have been used to illustrate what has been said about the man and what he himself has said. The book will retail for £10.95
John Wiley: *01243 770668*

...and still loaded

Despite losing over five billion pounds in the stock market crash, Bill Gates was recently named the richest man in America for the fifth year running. He is currently worth £35.4 billion.

'No strings' from BT

BT's Wireplay online games service is offering 'pay as you go' Internet access - allowing direct access to the worldwide web with users paying for just a standard call charge plus an additional penny per minute. Named Wireplay Internet, the package bypasses the usual Internet Service Providers and subscription charges.
Wireplay: *0171 492 8575*

Website Partners

Software Partners has launched eGames2000.com, a new Website designed to showcase Romtech's Galaxy Series of 'Family Friendly' games. Downloadable demos allow users sample the range before buying.
Software Partners: 01480466111

School helper

A free piece of Europress Software worth up to £20 is being offered to schools when parents buy one of the Europress range for their children. Headmasters can choose from over 25 titles available.
Europress: *01625 855 000*

Lara takes on fashion labels

Eidos Interactive teams up with surfwear firm Animal for launch of ambitious 'Lara ©' collection

SHE HAS conquered caves and catacombs, but can Lara Croft claim the catwalk too?

Core Design has teamed up with the surfwear maker Animal to produce the new 'Lara ©' clothing range.

The understated T-shirts, fleeces and backpacks are a far cry from the horrible, and frankly heavy metal-style, merchandising of most games clothing.

"It's not tacky advertising," explained Core's Suzie Hamilton. "We wanted to create something that Lara would wear."

Though Core will target gamers via a website and direct mail, the clothing could eventually hit the High Street. "It's definitely possible," said Hamilton. "It all depends on whether we get enough interest."

Other products in the Lara © line include a polo shirt and a sweatshirt. Accessories range from record bags and a girl's backpack to CD carrying cases. All feature the same black and white styling and the Lara © logo, as discrete labels or a subtle taping effect.

DRESSED FOR SUCCESS: The Lara Croft phenomenon continues

The complete range is due to go on sale on November 20th, when the catalogue is distributed with Tomb Raider 3. Prices range from £4.99 for a keyring to £69.99 for a padded team jacket.

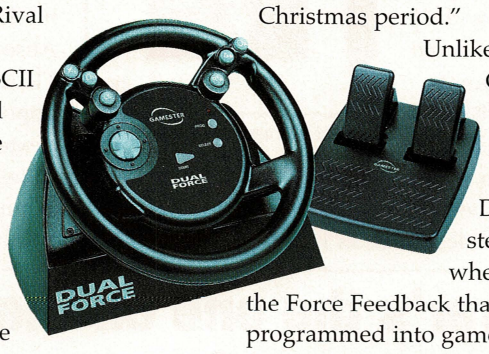
True to Lara's mythical origins, the photo shoot took place at an exclusive country estate.

Shock move by LMP

LMP HAS SNEAKED into first place in the crowded race to bring out the first true Dual Shock steering wheel for PlayStation.

The manufacturer's £69.99 Gamester PSX Dual Force steering wheel is set to go on sale on October 19th. Rival products from Joytech and ASCII aren't due until November. The Dual Force wheel will take over from Gamester's existing Rumble Force model.

"We have been somewhat overwhelmed by the trade's enthusiasm for the Gamester Dual Force," said Alan Champion, LMP's general manager. "As pre-orders are exceeding our projected production schedule, our Hong Kong office is examining additional facilities to ensure units are available through the Christmas period."



Unlike the earlier Gamester Rumble Force wheel, the Dual Force steering wheel supports the Force Feedback that is actually programmed into games - rather than simply reacting to in-game sound.

It also boasts full circular design and four modes of operation.

Games TV lives on at C4

GAMESMASTER IS DEAD and buried, but Channel 4 hasn't given up on games.

The station is looking to fill three 15-minute slots with games shows. A handful of production firms have already been approached, but nothing has yet progressed beyond the pilot stage.

Despite boasting a healthy audience throughout its seven series run, the death knell came earlier this year when Channel 4 refused its producer Hewland's demand for a later timeslot.

But Channel 4 may schedule at least one of the new programmes later in the evening.

The success of products like Goldeneye and Unreal is starting to convince TV bosses that adults do play games too these days.

Harvest festival

£1MILLION OF MARKETING for Body Harvest heads up a strong fourth quarter for Gremlin.

The publisher's first N64 product, it is also the first fruit of Gremlin's acquisition of DMA Design last year.

"Our belief is that Body Harvest is an epic in the same way as the movie Titanic," explained Nigel Bruce, Gremlin's recently appointed head of marketing.

"We've put together a campaign that mirrors the depth of the title. We've been inspired by the way movie companies work."

Pride of place is a 60-second cinema commercial that will run for three weeks. Reflecting the games apocalyptic plot, it features Bill Clinton as leader of the imperilled free world.

Press marketing will concentrate on lifestyle and movie publications, with Body Harvest featuring in the listing sections usually frequented by movie ads.

The DMA brand won't be prominent and specialist press advertising isn't a priority.

Body Harvest goes on sale Friday November 13th.

Other imminent titles from Gremlin include Actua Golf 3 (October 23rd), Pool Shark (November 27th) and surefire hit Actua Soccer 3 (November 27th).

THE FULL WORMAGE

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The Full Wormage - a triple Worms compilation pack featuring Worms 2, Worms United, and the Worms Addiction Pinball Table

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Newswire

Solid US debut for Metal Gear

Konami of America is spending big to rubber-stamp the success of the eagerly-awaited Metal Gear Solid. Some $4 million is earmarked, with Sony of America also adding another $1.5m in TV support to back the release Stateside later this month. More than 50 30-second slots will be aired over a 10-week period, while the game will also feature in Sony's own TV campaign.

Thrust into Denmark

Peripherals firm Thrustmaster has appointed Funware as its distributor in Denmark. "Funware are experienced players in the field and have the resources to manage Thrustmaster's extensive new product line-up for this season, as well as cope with our growth over the coming year," commented the company's Scandinavian sales manager Peter Trapmore. "Our first order from Funware looks very promising and sales forecasts for Q4 in Denmark predict a 150 per cent growth on last year's figures."

2m target for WWF

Acclaim is expecting its chart-topping WWF War Zone to sell two million units in the US on PlayStation and N64 - and is spending heavily to ensure its hopes become a reality. A TV campaign will back the title in the run-up to Christmas in the US, while SCEA is bundling a demo of the game with PlayStation hardware during the season.

Infogrames to ramp up US

The US is the next major target for European publishing and distribution giant Infogrames. It was claiming last week that Stateside sales will see a five-fold increase in the current fiscal year . With only 20 per cent of total sales coming from the US at present, the company wants revenues to increase to a rather more acceptable 40 per cent.

MCV WORLD NETWORK

Cendant adds Nordic office

Dedicated office for northern territories as Cendant increases its powerful pan-Euro presence

AN AFFLUENT CULTURE and a high penetration of PCs in the home have attracted another major publisher to establish a dedicated division in Scandinavia.

So far Electronic Arts has been the only games firm to set up a truly localised office in the Nordic region, with other publishers opting to appoint sales and marketing partners in the territory.

Now PC games specialist Cendant has established a Scandinavian office covering Sweden, Norway and Denmark, following a new joint venture with local distributor IQ Media.

According to Cendant, Scandinavia already represents some 12 per cent of its total European business, with its revenue levels in the various territories expected to grow substantially following this latest direct move.

"For the first time Scandinavia sees a joint venture between domestic and foreign business interests within the games industry," commented IQ Media's managing director Jorgen Axelson.

"I think it is essential for the development of the industry in Scandinavia to have publishers think long term for sales and marketing instead of short term distribution deals."

Cendant's joint European boss Christophe Ramboz added: "Scandinavian countries have the highest Internet penetration rate in the world and even if the market is not that big, it has an impressive installed base of PCs.

"The market potential is huge and for our strongest titles we are now convinced that with the right dedication a good title can sell on average 60,000 units."

Hasbro follows Leader

CONSOLIDATION OF the MicroProse and Hasbro business across Europe has already begun, with Leader Distribution snapping up the new group's product portfolio in Italy.

The veteran distributor has long been handling the MicroProse line-up in the territory, but has picked up the Hasbro Interactive range from rival CTO.

Leader has just started shifting Hasbro titles, with the release of Hedz, and the deal covers all PC and PlayStation titles including back-catalogue products.

Hasbro joins a strong roster of publishers who use Leader to handle their titles in Italy, including Eidos (PC only), Cendant Software, Virgin, The Learning Company, Mindscape, Broderbund and Europress.

At the same time, the distributor has added a number of other key accounts in recent weeks, including SCi, JVC and Lego Media.

"The fact that Hasbro purchased MicroProse was good news for us, as we were already MicroProse's distributor in Italy," commented Leader Distribution's president John Holder.

"We are very pleased to be working with them."

SpectraVideo heads Stateside

PERIPHERALS firm SpectraVideo has set up a US operation.

The name behind the successful Logic 3 brand has established a base in Mason, Ohio, along with a distribution centre in Chicago.

These join SpectraVideo's UK head office in Wembley and its Australian distribution company Logic 3 in Chatswood.

"The opening of our first USA office represents a significant move forward for SpectraVideo and confirms the company's long term strategy of becoming a world player," commented managing director Ashvin Patel.

Territory Update

Japan

PC CD-ROM
1. Flight Simulator '98
2. After Devil Force
3. Microsoft Golf
4. Special Force
5. Far-Distance Augusta

PLAYSTATION
1. Metal Gear Solid
2. Simulation School
3. Mountain Pass Max 2
4. SD Gundam
5. Girls Secret Agent

NINTENDO 64
1. Legend of Zelda
2. Lordly Caliber
3. Pockemon Stadium
4. Mother 3
5. Super Mario 64

Source: Login/64 Dream/Famitsu

Norway

PC CD-ROM
1. Commandos
2. Chessmaster 5500
3. World Cup '98
4. Age of Empire
5. Premier Manager '98

PLAYSTATION
1. Tekken 3
2. Gran Turismo
3. Crash Bandicoot
4. Final Fantasy VII
5. Road Rash 3D

NINTENDO 64
1. Mission Impossible
2. Banjo Kazooie
3. Waverace 64
4. F1 World Grand Prix
5. Goldeneye

Source: Hitcompany.no

Austria

PC CD-ROM
1. Dune 2000
2. Commandos
3. Anno 1602
4. Autobahn Raser
5. Bundesliga Manager '98

PLAYSTATION
1. Tekken 3
2. Gran Turismo
3. Resident Evil 2
4. Need For Speed 3
5. Lucky Luke

NINTENDO 64
1. Mission Impossible
2. Frankreich '98
3. Super Mario 64
4. Diddy Kong Racing
5. Cruisin' USA

Source: Libro

USA

ACTION
1. Goldeneye (N64)
2. WWF War Zone (PSX)
3. WWF War Zone (N64)
4. Banjo-Kazooie (N64)
5. Gran Turismo (PSX)

SIMULATION
1. Air Combat (PSX)
2. Loaded Greatest Hits (PSX)
3. Top Gun (PSX)
4. Gunship (PSX)
5. Thunderstrike 2 (PSX)

RENTAL
1. WWF War Zone (N64)
2. NFL Blitz (N64)
3. WWF War Zone (PSX)
4. Goldeneye (N64)
5. Gex (N64)

Source: NPD/TRSTS/VSDA

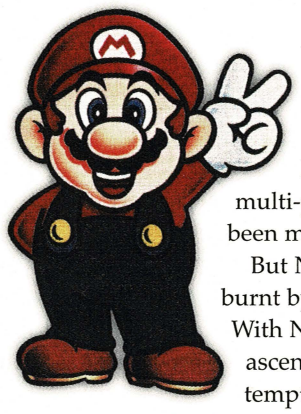
Mario for the Millennium

Just how far away is a successor to the Nintendo 64?

NINTENDO IS NOT only working on its next console already - it is developing software for it too.

Sources have revealed to MCV that the company has an early game running on prototype hardware. The rumours could dismay those developers who've just embarked upon fresh N64 projects. Nintendo's official line is that the N64's long-term strength will become apparent over the next couple of years.

Reports of an upcoming Nintendo console have been leaking out since spring, when Nintendo ended its relationship with N64 partner Silicon Graphics and began looking for new technology.



With the 64DD surely dead, some have suggested that various 64DD spin-offs might trickle out to keep the N64 console fresh until the new hardware is ready, in the same way the upcoming RAM pack will. For instance, a modem/cartridge hybrid enabling multi-player gaming has been mooted.

But Nintendo has been burnt by add-ons before. With N64 software in the ascendant at last, the temptation will surely be to let Sega and Sony fight it out, and then come to market with superior hardware - and another benchmark game like Mario 64.

Quick games made here

A POWERFUL new development tool from French outfit Virtools will get games projects up-and-running quickly.

The £30,000 platform, called NeMo Dev, is the brainchild of Virtools' CEO Betrand Duplat, who has produced similar systems for the VR industry. NeMo has already been purchased by Cendant Software in France, whilst Codemasters, Lionhead, MicroProse and RealWorld are all evaluating it in the UK.

"NeMo Dev enables developers to focus on game design, coding only what's needed to make the game truly exceptional," said Duplat.

"It allows developers to create interactive prototypes in weeks, re-use code, work more closely with the designers and save time and money."

Game programming is usually highly irregular, with developers requiring speed at all costs.

For this reason, developers can replace NeMo's 3D engine with their own if necessary.

T17 nukes Worms

NAME-CALLING is never pleasant. Just ask Team 17, which has had to change Wormageddon to Worms Armageddon.

MCV understands that Team 17 changed the name after pressure from Carmageddon publisher SCi.

When asked, T17 director Martyn Brown was careful to avoid mentioning SCi, but is clearly miffed.

"Apparently, little Johnny would get confused and think our short fat pink charmers might actually be the latest violent race-game for the over-18s," he said.

Talent

Brotherly Love

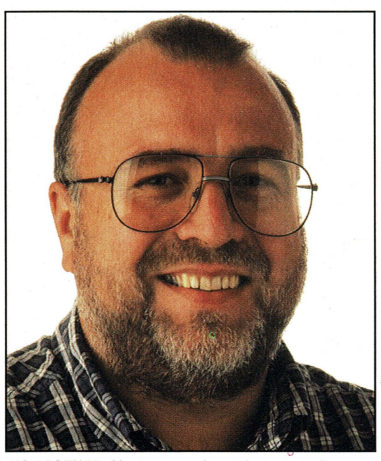
Why was GTI so happy to sign The Bitmap Brothers? **Owain Bennallack** reports...

THE BITMAPS are back. And they are rightly being welcomed with open arms.

Except, of course, this is a developer that never actually went away. After Z (the over-hyped PC strategy game whose existence become almost mythical at times) the boys busied themselves supporting the title and, it transpires, working on a sequel.

They also hammered out management changes that have seen the original three-man partnership dissolve to leave Mike Montgomery as sole owner.

His former partners, Steve Kelly and Eric Matthews, remain as head of programming and head of design respectively. These are basically the roles they've filled since their stunning Amiga debut, Xenon.



BIG BROTHER: Montgomery has taken control

The 1989 sequel, Xenon 2 no less, was equally impressive. But it was the title sandwiched in-between, Speedball, that the Bitmaps remain most famous for. The best future sports game ever, Speedball and its sequel sold for years.

Any Amiga gamer will confirm that the Bitmaps maintained quality with Cadaver (1990), Gods (1991), Magic Pockets (1991) and The Chaos Engine (1993). This fuelled tremendous Z hysteria - and the inevitable media backlash.

In retrospect, Z was a great game - and it wasn't delayed that much. Rather, it was developed when making games simply began to take longer. The Bitmaps (and Bullfrog with Dungeon Keeper) were unfortunate enough to usher in this era.

Today, the studio is ten strong and looking to move from its decade old base in Wapping. Montgomery says Z2 will mark a return to the limelight although, as in the old days, he's loathe to reveal game specifics. It'll be ready when it's ready.

And no, they're not really brothers.

Production Line

Call for Cannes

Reed Midem is calling for entries for the 1999 Milia D'Or Awards to be held in Cannes in early February. Game categories include Action, Adventure/RPG, Strategy, Simulation/Sports and Family Entertainment. Nominations must be made by November 10th.

Milia D'Or Awards: *+33 0141 904476*

How do you DVD?

The European DVD Developers Group (EDDG) aims to grow the European DVD industry. It has been set-up by multimedia producers Abbey Road Interactive together with Electric Switch Limited, a DVD Production Centre. Any company can join EDDG provided, oddly, that it has already developed a commercial DVD title.

Abbey Road Interactive: *0171 266 7000*

Dream movie-lover

Sega will use The Duck Corp's TrueMotion video compression technology in Dreamcast. The company claims it will allow Dreamcast to support movie-quality video playback.

Sega: *0181 9953399*

Packing them in

Support for Nintendo's imminent 4Mb RAM pack is growing. Acclaim has revealed that in addition to Turok 2, NFL Quarterback Club 99 will exploit the device. LucasArts' big hope Rogue Squadron will also be compatible.

Acclaim: *0171 344 5000*

Sega gets Adrenaline

Adrenaline Interactive, the company responsible for the PlayStation version of Tiger Woods '99, has announced it will develop products for Dreamcast.

Adrenaline: *+1 310 821 7880*

Another thumbs up for Epic

Devil's Thumb Entertainment is the latest developer to licence Epic's Unreal engine. It will be used to remake the Amiga game Hired Guns for the PC. The title will be quite different to Unreal - a squad-based perspective will enable players to control four characters simultaneously.

Psygnosis: *01244 659286*

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ENTERTAINMENT

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Staying Power

With so many new studios emerging, the biggest task facing any established games developer right now is staff loyalty. How do you find talent, nurture it and then keep it? MCV asks Core Design's Jeremy Smith...

THE VERY BEST companies, by definition, employ the very best people, and good people are hard to find.

While large companies are prepared to offer rich rewards to coax the brightest stars away from developers the lures are not always strictly financial.

Over the years, the US has proven a tempting draw for many European developers - although a lot of the developers that fancy a life in California do end up returning to rain-sodden Britain.

Artistic independence is also cited as a reason for moves. If a talented individual feels suffocated by corporate rules or commercial mandate, he will soon look to take his skills elsewhere.

So, how does any developer or publisher actually go about hanging on to their precious programmers and artists?

Core Design's boss Jeremy Smith describes it as one of his biggest challenges. His company, for some time a wholly-owned but autonomous studio within Eidos Interactive, was actually formed 10 years ago when Smith himself was the 'talent'.

He had decided that a change of scenery was in order and set up his own development company. Last year, and in almost exactly the same fashion, Toby Gard and Paul Douglas, the creators of the mighty Lara Croft, broke away from the company that nurtured them to form Confounding Factor.

He has been through the whole breakaway process himself very successfully, but Smith has a word of warning for the many industry individuals who are currently seeking to quit their employers and found colonies of their own.

"When I set up it really was bloody hard work," he recalls. "At the moment, because the industry is buoyant, everybody's mad for it, but we all know that historically the business will flatten. And when it flattens, it's batten down the hatches and pray for a couple of years."

> ***"These vultures of the business, that scour companies. They just want punching in the mouth.***

But, right now, programmers and others are seeing the attraction of employing themselves, of calling the shots. Smith is under no illusion as to the thinking behind this trend.

"It's coming from the developers' perceptions that they're not earning enough money. I think they feel that they're creatively stifled. Maybe they dream of selling their company for £40 million and driving off into the sunset."

Smith says pointedly that going it alone is "as easy as falling off a log" but making the new company work is a rather different matter.

"People leave and they set up a business. They visit another company and they tell them 'well, we've done one game which sold a huge quantity and now we've left and we've got this great idea. We don't really know what we're doing, though, so will you help us set up?'

"And then the company usually says 'yeah, okay' and they may buy a little percentage of the company or give them a few

"Who cares if yesterday's Chinese meal is still underneath the desk? It'll eventually get thrown away

thousand pounds to help them set up. Then the developer thinks they've done the hard bit and they can concentrate on making games, and much more money."

But actually running a company and getting great products out the door is a tough business. Even old hands are struggling. "Look at Sensible," says Smith. "What a great record those guys have got. But they're in all sorts of trouble at the moment. Desperate."

For years, the company behind the Sensible Soccer series seemed unstoppable. But founder Jon Hare finally revealed earlier this year that it is up for sale - and most within the business had known that to be the case for months anyhow. So if successful, well established, companies find its difficult to flourish in the current sunny industry climate, just how difficult may life prove to be for the new teams?

"These new studios normally get given a nice amount of money in order to coax them away from their current employers and make the primary individuals concerned feel great, but the turnout at the other end can easily be zero."

The draw of life across the Atlantic can also be the deciding factor for young developers. Core is no stranger to this. It is, after all, based in deepest Derbyshire rather than super-cool San Francisco.

"The one thing I can't conquer," laments Smith, "is the sun, the sea, the limo picking you up from the airport.

"All I can do is sit somebody down when they're thinking of going to California, or wherever, and say 'Okay fine, but at the end of the day please remember that it's ultimately only another office in another country and you're still sitting in front of a computer screen all day. Tell me the difference'."

As far as hanging on to talent goes, Smith finds that the biggest problem in the industry, far greater than people moving to the States or the perceived creative freedom that comes from being your own boss, is others simply poaching your staff. He hates it with a passion.

"These vultures of the business, that scour companies. They just want punching in the mouth. I mean they should just go off and do what we do, which is create our own talent. We home-grow it. We take people from their bedrooms or from school. I've got probably one of the best animators in the industry and he's still only 19. If someone poached him I'd just go crazy. I hate it. It is an absolute nightmare."

The problem of losing talent to other companies, and the pull of sunnier climes will always be there. But what about finding the young-bloods in the first place, how are the supply lines? Smith doesn't seem to have a problem, and believes that those who complain about lack of British development talent - or at least kids with the kind of raw skills that can be nurtured - simply aren't looking hard enough.

But what sort of environment keeps talent happy in Derby? A relaxed working environment and sound financial prospects are Smith's driving factors.

"My philosophy is that I make the guys' lives as happy as possible. We still use a kind of bedroom philosophy here. The rooms are reasonably untidy, not particularly corporate. Who cares if yesterday's Chinese meal is still underneath the desk? It'll eventually get thrown away. There's no suits here. We work very much as a team."

From a financial point of view, Smith is certain that working at Core is a sound investment. A principle which can apply to many other 'established' studios working within big publishing outfits. "I don't think I've ever lost anybody because of money. Money's never an issue when it comes to people considering their future here."

Sure, in his position it is perhaps predictable that Smith is full of words of warning about going it alone. But he's been there and done it himself and arguably knows the pitfalls and the potential rewards better than anyone else.

"I'm certainly not against free enterprise. We try to let people leave amicably, so they can come back. The grass is not always greener, you know, and there are a lot of people who have to discover that the hard way."

GIZMOS 'R' US

The great thing about computers is that you can connect all sorts to them. And the great thing about computer enthusiasts is that they'll try anything. Andy Hutchinson runs through the 10 extras worth stocking this autumn...

New technology such as Force Feedback has bolstered the PC controller sector

THEY MIGHT have been born from tedious spreadsheets, impenetrable databases and bloody-minded operating systems, but during the '90s PCs have evolved in an infinite number of directions.

The modern PC is a technological Swiss Army Knife, capable of turning its hand to practically any task - if the tools aren't to hand then you can guarantee that someone will create them.

It's this constantly evolving nature of the PC that has seen it rise from such mudane origins to become a powerhouse of technological goodies.

The PC is a technological Swiss Army Knife, capable of turning its hand to practically any task - if the tools aren't to hand then you can guarantee someone will create them

The vast number of PCs that exist worldwide mean that there are fortunes to be made in providing hardware and software. Come up with a decent peripheral, add-in card or software program and you'll get very rich, very quickly.

Hardware manufacturers have been making vast profits for many years now, by creating innovative products. Ground-breaking add-ons such as the original Sound Blaster soundcard or the 3Dfx graphics card have nudged the PC in different directions, often creating entire new niche markets in the process.

Pushed, in part, by the development of ever-faster processors by Intel, new technology is constantly improving the PC user's lot. The development of the graphics card is a testament to how far things have come, from the first Hercules VGA model, with its 16 colour display and ISA design, to today's AGP models which push the PC into the realm of the professional graphics workstation.

Nobody could have predicted the effects that the development of the 3D accelerator card would have on the PC market. Now there are a huge variety of cards available, catering to the speed-obsessed PC gamer, the family and the casual user.

The sound card market went through some changes last year, largely in response to the explosion of accelerated graphics. Companies such as VideoLogic, Diamond and Orchid released DSP equipped soundcards offering such novelties as surround sound and accelerated joystick ports.

These didn't take off to the same extent as the graphics cards, although I'm prepared to bet money on the fact that the new Sound Blaster Live! creates a few waves.

DVD-ROM and DVD-RAM's just around the corner, with the first few half-decent products coming through OEM and retail channels. Monitors are becoming cheaper in inverse proportion to their mushrooming size and speakers are being upgraded, enhanced and otherwise tweaked.

Joysticks now sport Force Feedback technology for that tactile input, keyboards come equipped with ergonomic wrist wrests and even mice get a wheel and extra buttons.

In short, developers and manufacturers are finally starting to treat PC owners with a bit of respect. Instead of giving us limp add-ons, we're getting powerful cards, good quality equipment and the kind of pricing that helps keep PC prices in the realm of the ordinary punter.

Sound Blaster Live!

Creative Labs: 0118 934 4322

Everyone thought Creative Labs had lost the plot when it carried on producing hardware for the outdated and slow ISA card interface. This new model illustrated just how wrong we were, since it's a quick PCI model with a very high specification.

Capable of driving up to four speakers at once and with a vast bundle that includes Unreal, this a must-have soundcard that makes all other models sound like cats on heat.

VideoLogic Speakers

VideoLogic: 01923 260511

The City-placed Brit hardware firm is calling these as yet unnamed speakers a 'paradigm shift' in sound quality - and it's not wrong.

Combining absolutely first class hi-fi quality sound reproduction with the kind of decibel output that would put a stack of Marshall speakers at a Motorhead concert to shame, absolutely nothing that's on the market can touch them and for just under £200, they're a serious bargain.

Sidewinder Pro Force Feedback

Microsoft: 0345 002000

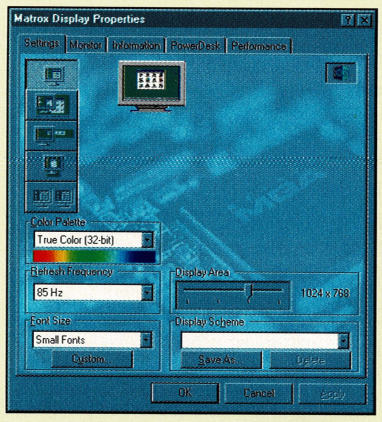
It sounded like a gimmick at first, but Force Feedback technology is starting to win people over, since it adds a totally new dimension to the whole gaming experience.

Which Graphics Card?

The graphics card market is going through one of its three-monthly revisions at the moment, with a new range of improved models coming onto the market in time for Christmas.

These new cards, most of which are 2D/3D combo models were much in evidence at last month's ECTS, and they show just how easy it is to move the goalposts in this ridiculously volatile market place.

The new Savage 3D chipset is a sight to behold, offering frame rates beyond those possible on a single Voodoo 2 card. S3, the developer of the chipset, was running demo machines showing games like Unreal and Incoming in sumptuous colour and rendering quality. The chipset also supports TV output, so punters can play games on the family TV, instead of gathering around a monitor.



The Microsoft model is one of the cheapest on the market (at £120), but also the best, combining a very grippable handle with a vast selection of buttons. The judders, jolts and vibrations experienced when playing a game like Urban Assault really bring the experience alive. Recommended to anyone with a table capable of withstanding the strain.

Monster Voodoo 2

Diamond: 0118 944 4400

This company was one of the first to market with a graphics card based on 3Dfx's Voodoo 2 chipset and the 12Mb model is still one of the best.

Few cards can get close to the Voodoo 2 models for speed and quality of rendering, although some (like the Matrox G200 Millennium) do accomplish this.

Team a card like this with a good Pentium II system and punters have just about the best games playing platform possible.

Power VR SG

VideoLogic: 01923 260511

Apart from a small demonstration earlier in the summer, little's been heard of VideoLogic's Power VR Second Generation based PC card, leading some people to gossip that it had been canned.

It hasn't and the card's due for release in time for the Christmas rush. This is the current state-of-the-art in 2D and 3D rendering and some predict that it will trounce all comers when it's finally released.

Let's face it, Sega wouldn't put it in Draamcast and a new line of arcade games if it was cack.

LG DRD-820B DVD-ROM

LG: 01753 500400

DVD drives will, of course, go through the massive development process that happened with CD-ROM, but this is as good a starting point for retail as any.

The LG model's the best DVD drive on the market at present, offering very healthy access speeds with excellent backwards compatibility (you can still bung your CDs in), simple installation and the vast storage possibilities offered by DVD.

If consumers want to play X-Files without changing CDs every five minutes, then this is what you should sell them.

SyQuest SparQ drive

SyQuest: 0131 339 2022

One of the most staggering changes in hardware over the last few years has been in cheap storage devices. It started with the 120Mb Zip Drive from Iomega, but for quality and perfect levels of storage space we have to recommend the SparQ drive.

They can be retailed for £150, complete with 1Gb removable disks that only cost £30 to replace and run nearly as fast as a hard drive. Consumers can back up their data, use one for games, one for productivity and one for the porn they download from the Internet. They'll never have to worry about the safety and portability of their data again.

Lexmark 5700 colour printer

Lexmark: 01628 481500

Colour printers have improved extraordinarily over the last few years and they've got to the point now where you can have photo quality at ridiculously cheap prices.

The Lexmark printer is one of the best around, offering 1200dpi output, a low unit cost (£199) and excellent drivers and bundled software.

Psion 5

Psion: 0990 143050

Not strictly speaking a peripheral, granted, but still a brilliant PC related tool.

The Psion 5's the best palmtop on the market. It combines a superb operating system called EPOC32 (which makes Windows CE look like Sinclair Basic) with a jaw-dropping design and wraps it up in the kind of unfailing usefulness that makes it indispensable.

Punters can plug a lead in the back of their PC (or hold it near an Infra Red port) and it'll synchronise with all their calendar utilities and transfer files on and off their computer with considerable ease.

Sportster Message Plus

3Com: 01628 890670

BT might be hyping its Home Highway (ISDN) system for all its worth, but most punters will be using standard phone lines for some time to come.

For high speeds, excellent reliability and the only bundled fax software we've encountered that works every time, it's got to be this 3Com modem. Team it up with a decent phone line and it'll run at speeds up to about 50K without a blip.

What About The Software?

PC hardware's only as useful as the software that you run on it - witness the crap take-up of USB (Universal Serial Bus) products, caused mainly by the fact that only Windows 98 supports it natively.

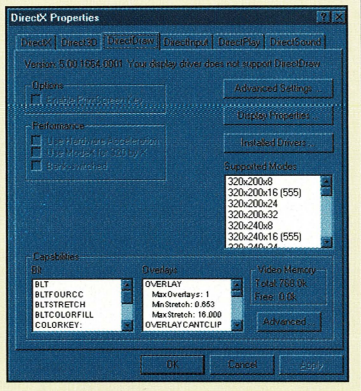
With graphics cards the main issue is always going to be the drivers that link the card to the operating system and our experience in this area has proved salutary.

There are basically two main standards for modern PC games - Direct X and Open GL. Direct X is Microsoft's creation, produced so that PC users could play games within Windows 95, 98 and NT5. Open GL is an industry standard 2D and 3D application programming interface (API) and one that makes 3D accelerated Quake possible. There is some convergence going on (Microsoft will incorporate Open GL into Direct X8), but many cards can't run Open GL based games.

Much more work needs to be done to make sure that a card that carries Direct X support will run on all Direct X games, because this certainly isn't the case at the moment. The problem doesn't appear to lie with the hardware manufacturers, however, many of whom go out of their way to release updated drivers whenever possible, but with Microsoft which, in typical style, constantly changes its API.

In recent months the situation has improved considerably and Direct X6.0 is the most stable API yet. MCV has had it installed for a few weeks now and we've discovered no software inconsistencies beyond the usual graphics card glitches.

Roll on the day when you can install a game in any Windows equipped PC and guarantee that it'll make the most of your hardware.



Matrox is justifiably pleased with its G200 based cards, which offer market leading 2D (for ordinary Windows usage) with leading edge 3D. We've had the Millennium G200 installed at MCV for a few months now and can highly recommend it.

Perhaps the chipset's best quality is that it renders colours far more vibrantly than other chipsets, making virtual landscapes really come alive. It's also one of the cheapest cards on the market and with the multimedia capable Marvel G200 on the way, Matrox is leading the pack.

Diamond and Orchid have long supported 3Dfx's Voodoo chipsets and so it is with the latest models, both Voodoo 2 and Banshee. The Diamond Monster 3D 2 is the best of the Voodoo 2 cards, although Orchid's Righteous 2 is equally capable, just a bit too expensive.

For really stupid rendering power it's possible to chain a couple of Voodoo 2 cards together - check out Unreal, played at 1024x768 on one of these and prepare to be staggered. There again, if any consumer can afford to buy two Voodoo 2 cards, perhaps they should be investing in standalone arcade boxes instead.

ATi offers a strong range of cards, although they're aimed more at the lucrative OEM market than retail. Their @ series, utilises the AGP port to offer good (but not outstanding) rendering speeds that seem a bit limp in comparison to Matrox or Diamond's efforts. The Rage Pro Turbo card is excellent though, offering TV output and a built-in aerial socket so you can watch Brookside on the computer.

Then of course there's 3Dfx's new Banshee chipset, which is available now in a Guillemot card. Released mainly in response to the success of 2D/3D cards like the Diamond Viper 330 and the Matrox G200, it offers reasonable level of 2D and 3D and is proving popular at retail.

Still a strong product, Banshee based cards are perfect all-round models and if 3Dfx manages to get the unit price down low enough, it might even sell a few.

HE WHO BEFRIENDS THE NINJA SHALL REAP GREAT REWARDS

Ancient Proverb

To make sure your rewards are plentiful, here's every trick you'll need to ensure **Ninja Shadow of Darkness** disappears off your shelves...

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Extensive high profile advertising in the specialist games press throughout August, September and October.

Key advertising in many lifestyle magazines such as Match, Shoot, Viz, Sky, FHM and Select.

Fun shopping centre tour where consumers can play the game and enter a competition to win a fantastic 'Ninja' mountain bike!

"Eidos is on to another winner here... you won't be disappointed by the results... the graphics are gorgeous and the animation's smoother than a baby's bum."

PLAY MAGAZINE

NINJA

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TM

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TOTAL PLAYSTATION
90%

FROM THE CREATORS OF TOMB RAIDER, TOMB RAIDER II AND FIGHTING FORCE

CORE

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PlayStation

RELEASE DATE: 23RD OCTOBER 1998

ninja ('nindʒə) *n., pl.* **-ja** *or* **-jas.** (sometimes cap.) a person skilled in **ninjutsu,** a Japanese martial art characterised by stealthy movement and camouflage. [Japanese]

To make sure your copies of Ninja Shadow of Darkness aren't camouflaged in-store, place your requests for our range of eyecatching point of sale:

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EIDOS
INTERACTIVE

Better late than never?

Having already scored through several key releases that have been pushed past Christmas, retail is now putting question marks against others. George Kotsiofides, formerly a retailer himself, asked 10 stores how they're feeling...

STORE *Pink Planet*
LOCATION *South West*
NAME *Brad Burton*
POSITION *Area Manager*

CUSTOMERS EXPECT games to be of a certain quality and won't accept unfinished or bug ridden software. I admire companies that have the balls not to release a game until it is finished, even if it means missing Christmas. We don't need another Frontier.

And anyway, some games can sell better in an uncluttered marketplace. We sold more in the weeks after Christmas last year than the weeks before. Perhaps there's a method to the madness.

It's up to retailers to be diplomatic with customers and explain that higher quality products could slip. I can't see it changing and it might even have a good effect. People have been waiting for Half-Life for over a year. If it slips, they may buy Sin - but it doesn't mean they won't buy Half-Life, too, when it arrives.

STORE *Computer Plus*
LOCATION *Isle of Wight*
NAME *Matt Hartill*
POSITION *Manager*

THE ESSENTIAL games this Christmas are Zelda, Tiberian Sun and Carmageddon 2. Another is FIFA '99, but I doubt there's much chance of that slipping. It's always out in time to take the top slot at Christmas. But I think EA will have a lot of work to do hyping up Sim City 3000 if it falls into next year.

Customers know that it's not our fault but lose interest in a game if it slips. Our regulars will come in and ask about a game and if it's slipped more than twice they'll move on to the next big thing. Red Baron 2 was hyped up a lot and then got delayed. Our sales suffered a lot because of this.

Slippage does seem to be more of a PC problem than a console one. I'm not sure that sales are neccssarily lost overall because many people will buy something else while waiting for a late game.

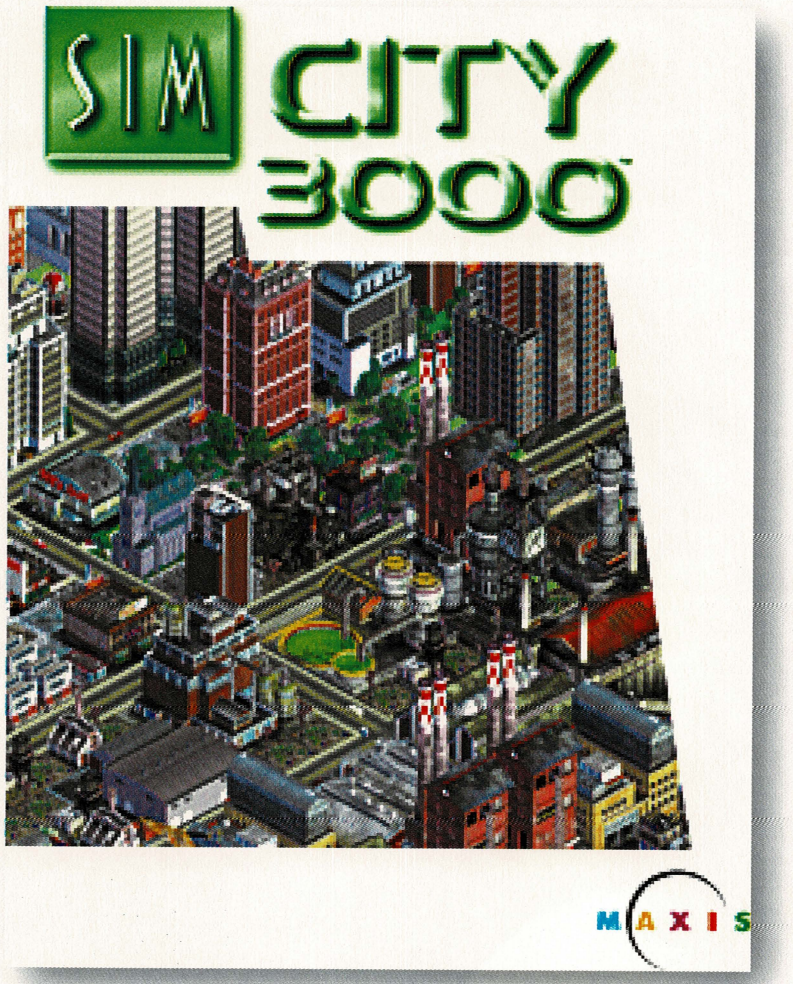
STORE *HMV*
LOCATION *Trocadero, PICCADILLY CIRCUS*
NAME *Lloyd Lapierre*
POSITION *Assistant Manager*

A GAME slipping has a big effect on us. Some customers think it's our fault when games don't come out on time. One swore at me recently because C&C Retaliation was delayed. That's rare though.

Customers think that because they see a game in a magazine it's already out and blame us when we don't have it. They don't read the mags carefully enough to see that it might only be 30 per cent complete and a year from release.

We sometimes rely on big releases and when they don't arrive it can obviously affect our sales for a particular week or month. But if a game misses Christmas then we'll probably still sell just as many if it turns up in the New Year.

Games do seem to slip more on the PC, I guess because the games are more sophisticated. Real gamers, though, will tend to wait for the game they want. People buying Christmas presents won't - they'll buy whatever they're told is the next best thing.



EA admitted last week that Sim City 3000 is struggling to make Christmas

HALFLIFE: Can it still sell lorry loads?

STORE *TCM*
LOCATION *Brighton*
NAME *Tony Mundy*
POSITION *Owner*

CHRISTMAS IS the busiest time of year for us so games slipping will hurt us badly. Zelda is essential this year for Nintendo. It will sell loads. I'm also hoping Tomb Raider III will arrive on time.

Customers won't wait for a game at this time of year. People want to buy presents for Christmas and will buy something else if a game has slipped or will just look around and walk out. Kids come in after Christmas wanting to spend their granny money, and if the game they want is not there, they're disappointed.

We all know that games slip, but we shouldn't have to accept it. Expectations are fuelled by the magazine reviews and customers assume that if a game's been reviewed then it must be out. It's not good for the industry.

STORE *Virgin Megastore*
LOCATION *Belfast*
NAME *Michael Crone*
POSITION *Product Supervisor*

IT'S DISAPPOINTING when a game slips, especially a big release, although I'd rather a game was complete before it goes on sale.

That said, some games are delayed so long that they fall into a technology gap and don't sell well when they're finally released because they look dated. Heart of Darkness is a good example.

GAME in Bournemouth says that slippage is getting worse

HMV Trocadero was abused by consumer over Westwood delay

This year quite a few games may end up being put back until the week after Christmas, which isn't too bad, as kids come in with Christmas money. Vital games this year are things like Tomb Raider III, Zelda and FIFA '99.

Customers don't blame us for games being delayed. Generally, our customer base comprises of 15-25 year olds who have been playing games for a number of years and are used to the way the industry works.

We do about 60 per cent of our sales in November and December so games slipping can have an effect but there are so many releases at Christmas there's always going to be an alternative purchase. We'll still get the sales.

STORE *Game Zone*
LOCATION *Harrogate*
NAME *Tony Whalley*
POSITION *Owner*

WE PRE-EMPT game delays by informing our customers as soon as possible. It can get pretty messy financially, as we'll budget towards the release of a game only to find it has slipped. That's dead money, which could have been spent elsewhere.

There are a lot of releases coming up which we're looking forward to. Zelda has just got to come out - it will be massive. And with Nintendo's new price point of £39.99, we're hoping Turok 2, 1080 and V-Rally 64 will come out in time for Christmas too. Tomb Raider III and FIFA '99 are a must for PlayStation.

Customers will keep trying if they really want a particular game. Delays are confusing for them and embarrassing for us, as we feel we've let them down even though it's not our fault.

Delays can damage a title's sales. Premier Manager '98 on the PlayStation was a joke - we had POS material a full year before it was finally released and when it did eventually come out it didn't sell very fast here. Consumers will only wait so long before they lose patience with a title.

STORE *Video & Games Workshop*
LOCATION *Caerphilly*
NAME *Richard Innes*
POSITION *Owner*

IT MAKES no difference to us when a game comes out, as we only rent games rather than sell them.

But what is annoying is when customers want a certain game and don't believe me when I tell them that it's not actually out yet.

That's the worst thing about delays, it gives indies - or any kind of software retailer for that matter - a bad name and generates mistrust.

STORE *Tomorrow's World*
LOCATION *Hove*
NAME *Trevor Cobb*
POSITION *Owner*

IF WE'RE given notice that a game is going to be late then it's not really a problem. On the other hand, if we've ordered a game and it doesn't arrive when we've been told it will, it makes us look like idiots to the customer.

When you tell people a game's not out yet they leave and go to a multiple because they don't believe you. They think you're lying or inefficient. Retailers are the 'face' of the industry. It's us that customers see every week so we get the blame.

It's a very annoying situation. We also have a video section in our shop. I could put my mortgage on accurate release dates for videos; there's just no question of them being delayed. I can't understand why it's so bad with games.

Games can still sell well if they miss Christmas, as long as they're released no later than the second week of January. Generally people will buy the best game around at the time if their preferred choice has slipped. We still get the sales.

I don't think the industry as a whole suffers too much from delays, as games will still sell. But individual retailers suffer because of the mistrust generated - and that directly effects our business.

STORE *Warp 9*
LOCATION *Hyde*
NAME *Karl Mace*
POSITION *Owner*

MAGAZINES DON'T help, that's for sure. Their information might be correct at the time they go to print but has usually changed by the time they have hit the shelves. Customers will say a game must be out because they read it in a mag, and then they blame us when it's been delayed.

The Player Manager '98 situation was terrible. Some people thought there was a retail conspiracy going on and we just wouldn't put the thing on sale.

A lot of people will wait for a game that they really want, although there is a limit to their patience. Adults will generally buy something else instead, but kids will wait, as they've often saved up especially.

It's a real shame when games slip, causing upset and confusion. We also sell videos, and I would say that around 95 per cent of new releases appear exactly when they are supposed to.

STORE *Game*
LOCATION *Bournemouth*
NAME *Jeremy Knight*
POSITION *Manager*

DELAYS ARE definitely a worry. After all these years and all the talk about improving the situation it still seems to be happening more and more, usually without any explanation.

Some people will hang on for a particular game that they're after. Tomb Raider III will be huge, as will Crash 3, Brian Lara Cricket and Tiberian Sun on PC.

Most importantly, Nintendo really needs to launch Zelda this Christmas. It will be a disaster for them if the game doesn't make it and there will be a lot of unhappy consumers around if it doesn't arrive in time.

We're disappointed that Championship Manager 3 has slipped. It would have been on a lot of male PC owners' Christmas lists and may suffer sales-wise when released next year.

Having said that, it will have less competition then and should still do really well. The most important thing is that the game is as good as everyone expects - quality will always shift units.

I have to say that the situation seems worse this year, as there are more big titles moving around - titles that already seem to have been on their way for a long time.

The thrifty element

Sony's Platinum games have gone down a storm since their introduction last year. They now represent a quarter of PlayStation game sales. As more arrive, Lucy Hickman looks into the gift horse's mouth....

THERE'S NO DOUBT that the Platinum range, launched just over 18 months ago, is a success story. The budget blockbusters regularly take nearly half of the top 20 PlayStation chart places and, earlier this year, all top five chart places were filled by these bargains.

At less than £20 for a triple-A title that's less than a year old, the punters, unsurprisingly, love them. So too do the Platinum publishers.

"It gives your products a new lease of life and, despite the lower price, you can actually make a lot of money out of them," offers Codemasters' spokesman Richard Eddy.

Even the retailers questioned seem reasonably happy. Opinion was divided though, as to whether this phenomenal success story could ultimately spell disaster for full price games.

Alan Welsman, marketing director at Sony Computer Entertainment UK, admits that sales of some full price games could be affected: "There was always the danger that the concept could cannibalise full price sales and undoubtedly there will always be a small proportion of consumers who will wait for the budget title.

"The evidence we have so far though, shows that full price sales are holding up and I don't think this will change: people will continue to buy full price games because they don't want to have to wait a whole year for the game they want."

Gremlin's Steve McKevitt praises the range for taking console games for the first time into the realms of 'impulse buy' and agreed that sales of blockbusters won't be affected.

He asserts, though, that non-triple-A title sales can suffer: "Gamers will always buy the big games but niche releases are going to be hurt. You can't just blame Platinum though, other factors, such as PlayStation libraries and the increase in quality releases generally, means that the more average games are going to suffer."

Steve Wilson, Electronics Boutique's console buying director, bluntly questions why any new console owner would buy a full price game now and called for the Platinum price to be raised.

"I would have preferred to have seen a £29.99 price for premium games, whatever their age, and £19.99 for B-titles. It's crazy that you have to prove that your game is the very best in order to be sold off cheaply - we must be the only industry in the world that does that. If anything the criteria should be reversed - if you sell X amount you shouldn't be allowed to put the game out so cheaply.

"I just don't like to see so many triple-A titles being sold at such a low price so soon - it's bound to under-value full price stock although, with the market growing so fast, that's hard to prove."

He adds, though, that the range could help the industry by opening up the market to a whole new audience and is only a hindrance when there are not enough strong titles up against big name Platinum games.

Conversely, John Harris from Shadowram Computers reckons the Platinum price point should now be lowered.

"Full price Playstation games are a bloody rip-off so anything that brings the price down is good. With full price games, you might get one good game in every ten and at around £45 a throw, that's just not value for money. Platinum titles are cheaper and are mostly big games so they serve their purpose very well, but I think £15 would be a better price point."

He adds that Platinum games overall are a positive thing because they offer more choice to punters and may have marginally increased his profit.

With many of them already released, Sony says that 24 games will re-appear on Platinum in 1998 - nine first party and 15 second or third party. It is determined to uphold its policy of allowing only the biggest and best games qualify: the current criteria is 400,000 sales in the first six months on sale.

Indeed, a senior Sony spokesman admitted that as the installed base increases, the more stringent the criteria will become.

But there is no limit on the number of Platinum titles that can be released. "If a game qualifies for Platinum status, we'll usually publish it," offered the company. "There's only been once or twice

Codemasters' TOCA went straight back to number one on Platinum

> ***"The Platinum range isn't just a chance for third parties to clear out all their crap. The qualification criteria is healthily stringent"*** Richard Eddy

Fox Interactive's Croc has already notched up over 600,000 sales across Europe - and gets a Platinum release this week

Going Platinum	Sony-published		Third party	
Some of the PlayStation hits currently slated to re-appear between now and January. Subject to change, of course...	***Soul Blade***	*Namco*	***Abe's Oddysee***	*GT Interactive*
	Time Crisis	*Namco*	***Duke Nukem***	*GT Interactive*
	Mickey's Wild Adventure	*Disney*	***Grand Theft Auto***	*Take 2*
	Disney's Hercules	*Disney*	***Croc***	*Fox/ EA*
			Resident Evil	*Capcom/Virgin*

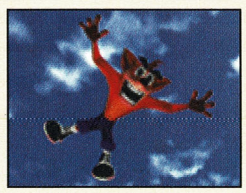
Who needs full price anyway?

The on-going success of the budget label is clearly evident in the weekly ChartTrack PlayStation listing, where the re-published titles consistently account for a major chunk of the sales. For the week ending September 26th, for example, almost half of the top 40 titles were Platinum releases...

	Title	Label
1.	Tekken 3	SCEE/Namco
2.	TOCA Touring Car	Codemasters Platinum
3.	Colin McRae Rally	Codemasters
4.	C&C Retaliation	Westwood/EA
5.	Gran Turismo	SCEE
6.	V Rally	Infogrames Platinum
7.	Tomb Raider 2	Eidos
8.	Tomb Raider	Eidos Platinum
9.	Crash Bandicoot	SCEE Platinum
10.	Abe's Oddysee	GTI Platinum
11.	Premier Manager '98	Gremlin
12.	WWF: Warzone	Acclaim
13.	Resident Evil 2	Virgin/Capcom
14.	Tekken 2	SCEE Platinum
15.	Die Hard Trilogy	Fox Platinum
16.	World Cup '98	EA
17.	Rayman	Ubi Soft Platinum
18.	FIA Formula 1	Psygnosis Platinum
19.	Spice World	SCEE
20.	Point Blank	SCEE/Namco
21.	Formula 1 '97	Psygnosis
22.	Croc	Fox/EA
23.	Actua Golf 2	Gremlin
24.	Micro Machines V3	Codemasters Platinum
25.	Soviet Strike	EA Platinum
26.	Three Lions	Take 2
27.	Grand Theft Auto	Take 2
28.	Worms	Infogrames Platinum
29.	ISS Pro	Konami Platinum
30.	Duke Nukem	GT Interactive
31.	Int. Track & Field	Konami Platinum
32.	G-Police	Psygnosis
33.	Bust A Move 2	Acclaim Platinum
34.	Theme Park	EA Platinum
35.	Porsche Challenge	SCEE Platinum
36.	Pandemonium	Take 2 Platinum
37.	Alien Trilogy	Acclaim Platinum
38.	Actua Soccer 2	Gremlin
39.	Casper	Interplay
40.	MK Trilogy	GTI Platinum

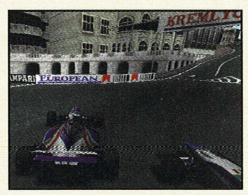
Source: ChartTrack/ELSPA

Abe's Oddysee

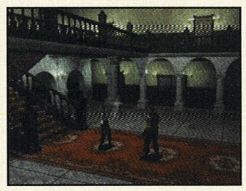


Crash Bandicoot

Tomb Raider



FIA Formula 1



Resident Evil

where we haven't and that was down to contractual difficulties - usually because a licensor didn't want its product associated with the budget sector."

Welsman explains why the range was introduced in the first place: "It's an entry level range designed to make the PlayStation more attractive to newcomers by offering more choice at a lower price.

"Also, only the very best games make it to the Platinum range, so people who can only afford a certain number of full price games per year can still get the blockbusters later on."

Two Codemasters titles have gone Platinum - Micro Machines V3 was followed last month by TOCA Touring Car, which went straight in at number one just 10 months after its full price release.

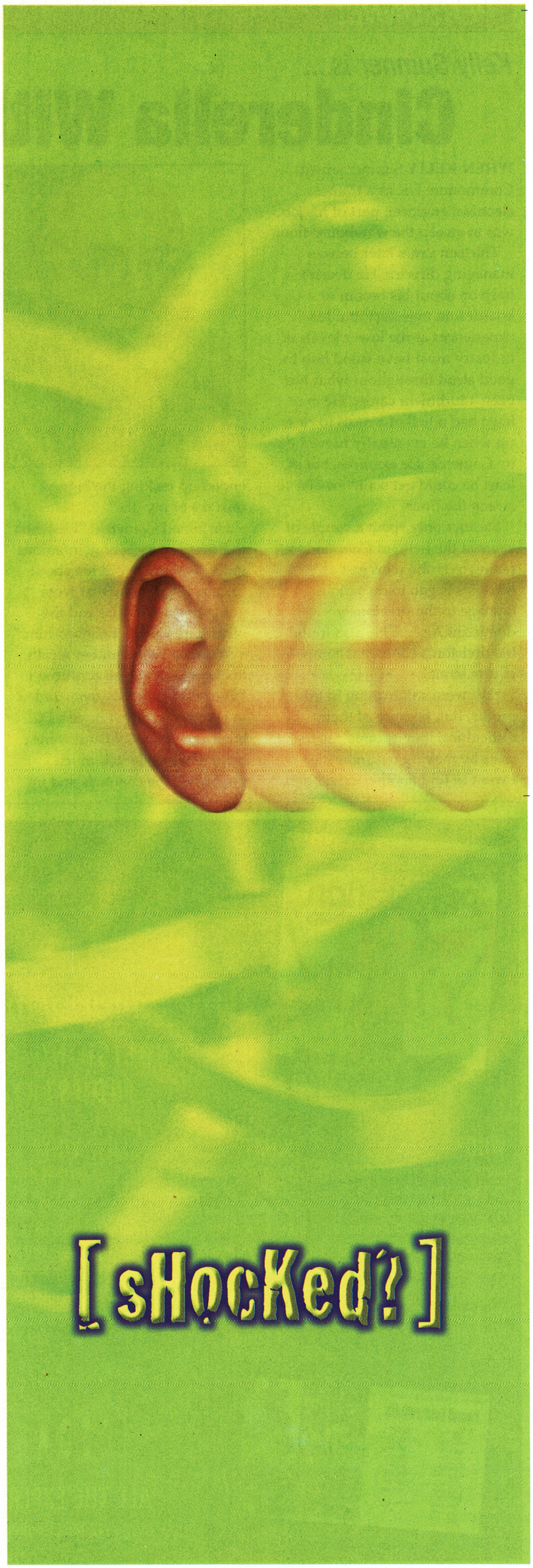
Richard Eddy explains that the range appeals to new users and people who want to experiment with new types of genre.

"Because Platinum games are effectively a 'best of' brand, buyers know they're not going to get a dud. £20 is a good sample price and opens up a whole new world to the less well off or casual gamer.

"The Platinum range isn't just a chance for third parties to clear out all their crap. The qualification criteria is healthily stringent."

Eddy believes that heavy marketing for Platinum titles is unnecessary. "A heavy retail presence - prudent buying of window displays, for example - together with favourable re-reviews in the specialist press and carefully placed specialist and mainstream advertising can work wonders."

Sony has no current plans to bring out another budget range and instead is intent on raising the profile of the Platinum range through Christmas and beyond.



Kelly Sumner is....

Cinderella With Balls

WHEN KELLY Sumner joined Commodore UK as a trainee electrical engineer, part of his job was to sweep the warehouse floor.

Thirteen years later he was managing director. He doesn't harp on about his broom to boardroom trajectory, but his experiences at the lower levels of industry must have stood him in good stead throughout what has been a turbulent career. He may have had a hell of a mess to clear up when he eventually moved on to Gametek, for example, but at least he could get someone else to sweep the floor.

Sumner only spent a couple of years at the helm of Commodore, taking over the reins just as consoles began to do serious damage to the previously dominant Amiga. He also found the division's US parent company in dire straits.

"We were still turning in tidy profits, but, because of their difficulties, they wanted me to cut costs by making redundancies, so I went to find another career and

ended up making the biggest mistake of my life."

He joined Gametek. "I listened to Bruce Lowry, a now infamous individual, who told me about this great company that were going to do this, that and the other and, sadly, I believed him."

Within a year, Sumner recalls, his worst fears were confirmed: "They had seriously over-traded in cartridges, didn't have a PC business to speak of and were being crushed by too much product in the channels and in warehouses - and the new stuff wasn't good enough to turn the situation around."

In 1997 he told the Gametek board that he would only stay if they either invested heavily to revamp product flow ("which I knew they wouldn't") or sell-up.

When they went for option B, Sumner went on to broker a deal with developer and publisher Take 2 Interactive (Gametek was already the firm's international distributor).

BMG's games arm was then acquired in March and, suddenly, Take 2 was a global player. Its current financial year ends this month and is expected to show revenues of over $170 million. Products such as Rainbow 6, Railway Tycoon (both PC) and Silicon Valley (N64) are in the pipeline, with GTA 2 scheduled for the second half of next year.

"It feels like the early days of Amiga. You know you're heading for success, it's just a question of how much - and answering that question's the fun part."

Biography

1977
Aged 16, joins the catering department at Holiday Inn.

1978
Joins Commodore as trainee electrical engineer.

1983
Switches to sales, eventually becoming divisional director.

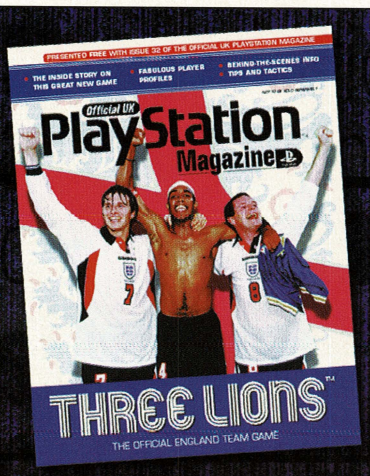
1991
Takes over as managing director of Commodore UK.

1993
Moves into software industry as international boss of Gametek.

1994
Spends a year in the States heading up worldwide sales.

1995
Back to UK. Becomes global CEO a year later.

1997- Present
Issues put-up or sell-up ultimatum to Board. Gametek duly sold to Take 2. Sumner installed as international boss.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content

the editorial and design bureau

PUBLISHING CREATIVITY WITH INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

WHO?
Content is a team of professional journalists and designers with 20 years experience in consumer magazines, software and multimedia development, book publishing and corporate publicity.

BOTTOM LINE:
We know the industry from all sides.

WHAT?
We create magazine supplements, advertisements, manuals, tips books, press releases and Electronic Press Kits. We plan, write, design and proof to film or disk. We listen to your needs and implement them.

BOTTOM LINE:
We hit deadlines so you hit targets.

WHY?
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BOTTOM LINE:
We understand your needs and will meet them.

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ALL THE EXPERTS IN ONE PLACE

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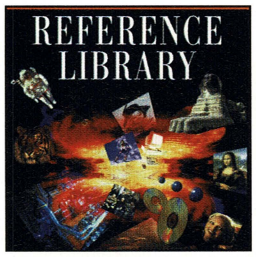
This week MCV spotlights new home software releases from Helicon, Cendant, Koch Media and Anglia Multimedia...

Penguin Hutchinson Ref Library

Available: **This month**
Supplier: **Koch Media**
Tel: **01256 707277**
Price: **£29.99**



FOLLOWING THE LAUNCH of the Hutchinson Educational Encyclopedia, Helicon releases the revised Penguin Hutchinson Reference Library.

It features nine reference titles aimed at post GCSE and 'A' Level students and boasts fully British content. It also includes a Time-Line of 13,500 events, some 1,500 illustrations and audio clips, eight million words, and over 400,000 entries.

The Library incorporates such titles as the Longman Dictionary, Hutchinson Encyclopedia '99, Roget's Thesaurus, and the Hutchinson Chronology of World History.

Adi English & Maths Series

Available: **This month**
Supplier: **Cendant**
Tel: **0118 920 9100**
Price: **£29.99**

ADI ARRIVES IN THE UK this month courtesy of Cendant, with eight titles comprising three CDs each for children aged three to 10.

As well as English and Maths, children can access features such as a world atlas, 2,000 curriculum based questions, an encyclopaedia, print program and an earth management game. Video sequences are also included with arcade style games offered as rewards for academic progress.

The Virtual Classroom allows users to meet other children online, and the series will be backed by a PR campaign, full page ads in selected consumer publications and demos for retail.

Ultrapack 2

Available: **This month**
Supplier: **Koch Media**
Tel: **01256 707277**
Price: **£39.99**

KOCH RELEASES its Ultrapack 2 compilation for the PC this month.

It features 10 products from publishers such as IBM, Lotus, Helicon and Cybermedia, with each disc packaged in its original sleeve.

The set covers several topics including education, reference and productivity, with titles including Geoff Hamilton's Garden Designer, AND Route '97 UK and Ireland, Simply Speaking Gold and the Hutchinson Multimedia Encyclopaedia 1998 amongst others.

A trade and consumer PR campaign will back the release with POS available for retailers.

Practical Food and Cookery Enc

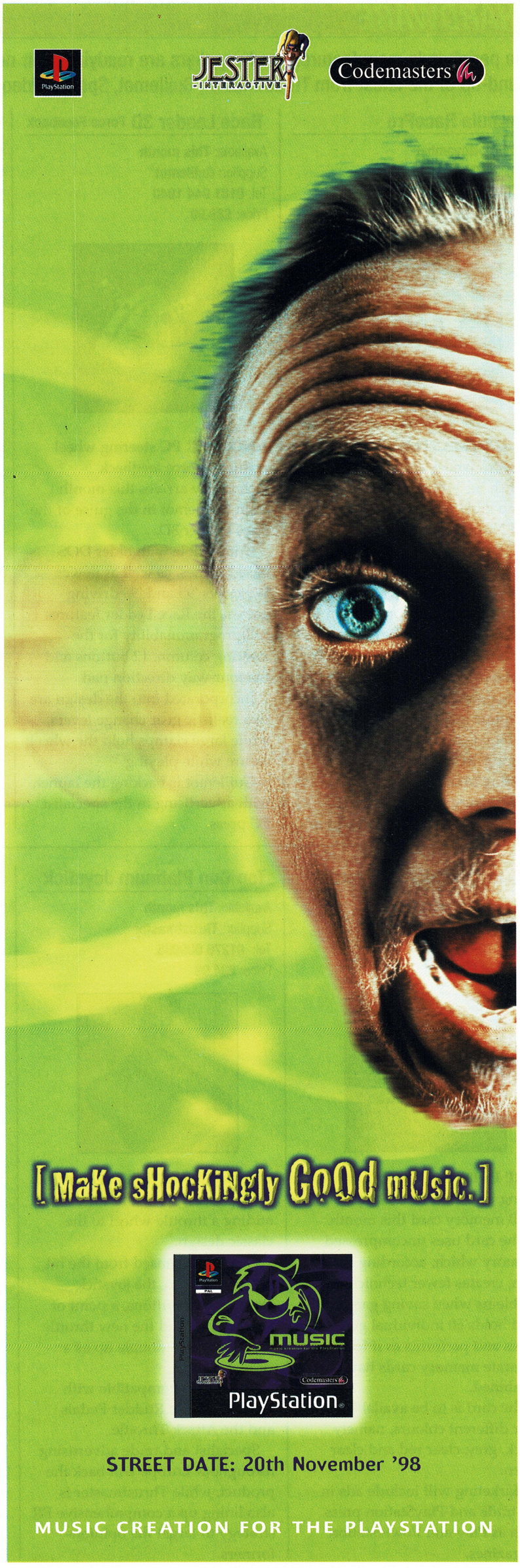
Available: **This month**
Supplier: **Anglia Multimedia**
Tel: **0171 579 4122**
Price: **£39.99**

DESIGNED AS A useful tool for experienced chefs and amateurs alike, the Cookery Encyclopaedia consists of four main sections on Recipes, Foods, Cooking Techniques and Nutrition.

The encyclopaedia features 2,500 food and cookery terms, 600 recipes, a glossary of over 300 technical terms and video footage showcasing key cooking techniques.

Included in the product is an analysis of 100 foodstuffs for nutritional composition as well as a user-friendly interface.

Marketing will concentrate on women's lifestyle magazines such as Good Housekeeping, She and Family Circle.



HARDWARE

The peripherals manufacturers and suppliers are readying their new launches for the Christmas season. And MCV offers a round-up of the latest from Thrustmaster, Guillemot, SpectraVideo, ASCII and Fire International...

Formula RacePro

Available: **November**
Supplier: **Thrustmaster**
Tel: **01276 609955**
Price: **£69.99**

THRUSTMASTER'S Formula RacePro wheel, scheduled for launch next month, will be compatible with both PlayStation and N64 consoles.

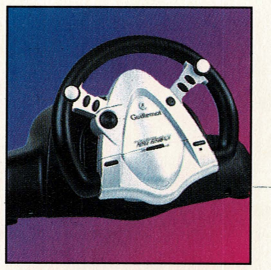
Designed to be comfortable placed on a user's legs, or on a tabletop, the wheel features thick padding for a comfortable grip.

Both PlayStation and Nintendo button sets are catered for, while digital or analogue control options are featured. In addition the analogue mode will allow for analogue acceleration and braking, as well as the usual steering function.

Marketing support includes advertising in the specialist press.

Race Leader 3D Force Feedback

Available: **This month**
Supplier: **Guillemot**
Tel: **0181 944 1940**
Price: **£89.99**



ANOTHER PC steering wheel featuring force feedback technology arrives this month from Guillemot in the guise of the Race Leader 3D.

Compatible with older DOS based games, as well as newer Windows '95 and '98 driving games, the Race Leader features full programmability for the steering column, 12 buttons and the four-way direction pad.

Incorporated into the design are two realistic gear change levers, while large clamps hold the wheel secure while playing.

Guillemot is backing the launch with advertising in the specialist PC press.

Cheat Master

Available: **This Month**
Supplier: **Fire International**
Tel: **01302 325225**
Price: **£12.99**

FIRE INTRODUCES the first in a series of cheat memory cards for the PlayStation this month.

The Cheat Master is designed to be autonomous of Blaze's Xplorer cheat cartridge and comes pre-loaded with completed game saves to allow access to secret levels, characters and hidden bonuses.

Game saves for the Tekken trilogy, Dead or Alive, Soulblade and Star Wars: Masters of Teras Kasi are featured on the card, with further additions expected over the coming months.

Executions in the trade and specialist press will support the launch.

Predator 2 Gun Pack

Available: **This Month**
Supplier: **SpectraVideo**
Tel: **0181 902 2211**
Price: **£34.99**

SPECTRAVIDEO launches its sequel to the PlayStation Predator Light Gun this month.

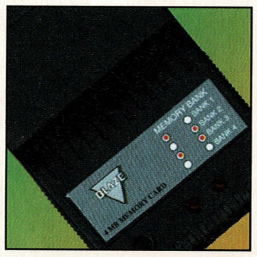
The Predator 2 light gun features a two-speed auto fire function, three speed bullet load and vibration sensors and is compatible with both Konami and Namco Guncon games, such as Point Blank.

A foot pedal is included to allow for easy reloading and it also boasts a SuperScope to allow for greater firing accuracy.

The gun will be backed by advertising in PlayStation magazines, while POS will be available for retailers to back the launch in-store.

Blaze 4MB Memory card

Available: **This month**
Supplier: **Fire International**
Tel: **01302 325225**
Price: **£19.99**



FIRE INTERNATIONAL is also lining up a new Blaze Playstation 4MB memory card this month.

The card uses uncompressed memory which, according to the firm, creates fewer technical problems when saving games. The card holds 60 individual game saves and performs as if four separate memory cards have been combined.

The card is to be available in four different colours, namely black, grey, clear red and clear green.

Marketing will include ads in the trade and PlayStation press, such as Play and Powerstation magazines.

Top Gun Platinum Joystick

Available: **This month**
Supplier: **Thrustmaster**
Tel: **01276 609955**
Price: **£34.99**

THRUSTMASTER HAS restyled its Top Gun Joystick for PC, adding a throttle wheel to the classic design.

Officially licensed from the hit movie Top Gun, the joystick features four buttons, a point of view switch and the new throttle which can also double up as a rudder control.

The stick is compatible with Thrustmaster's Rudder Pedals and the Attack Throttle.

Specialist and trade advertising throughout Europe will back the product, while Thrustmaster is also lining up a comprehensive PR strategy to target the opinion-formers.

ASCII Pad 64

Available: **November**
Supplier: **ASCII**
Tel: **01923 202097**
Price: **£24.99**

ASCII WILL LAUNCH its first N64 controller later this year.

The pad will feature the standard array of N64 pad buttons and also includes Z buttons on both sides, as well as a six-foot cable and a controller pack slot.

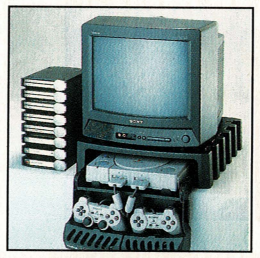
Turbo fire control is provided for each button along with an individual LED indicator light, which aids gamers in programming the pad.

The ASCII Pad 64 has a licence pending from Nintendo and will be backed by features in both specialist and consumer magazines such as Maxim.

A range of POS is also likely to be available for the trade.

Logic 3 Space Station

Available: **This month**
Supplier: **SpectraVideo**
Tel: **0181 902 2211**
Price: **£19.99**



LAUNCHED AT THE END of the month, the Space Station allows PlayStation owners to store their console and two pads neatly.

Requiring no assembly, the Space Station can support a 14-inch TV, monitor or video player. A two-stop drawer gives easy access to the console.

SpectraVideo is bundling the Space Station with a free CD rack, which will store up to 16 Sony discs in their cases or up to eight double CD cases.

SpectraVideo is planning two dealer mailouts to back the launch, along with advertising in the Playstation and multi-format press.

Logic 3

Logic 3

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PREDATOR GUN

TOPDRIVE 3 WHEEL

PS SPEED PADS

PS CHALLENGER PADS

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SpectraVideo plc.
Unit 27, Northfield Industrial Estate, Beresford Avenue, Wembley, Middlesex, HAO INW, U.K.
TEL: 0181 902 2211 FAX: 0181 903 6625
WEBSITE: http://www.spectravideo.com

USA (Office)
SpectraVideo USA Inc.
4660 Duke Drive, Suite 325 – 339, Mason, Ohio 45140, USA.
TEL: (513) 336 1370 FAX: (513) 336 1399
WEBSITE: http://www.spectravideo.com

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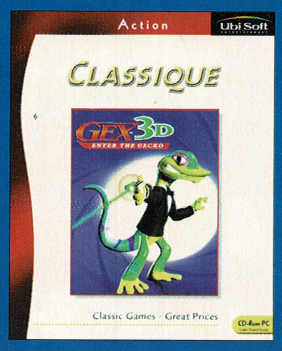
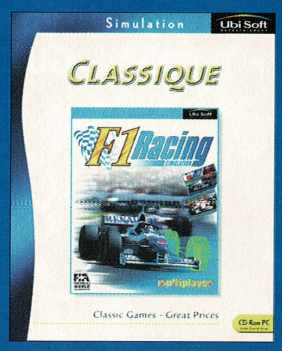
Gex 3D



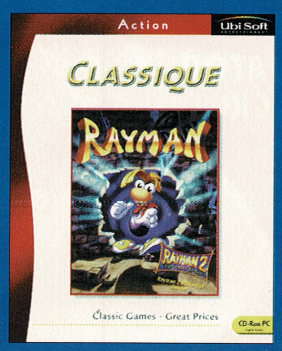
£12.99

F1 Racing Simulation



£12.99

Rayman



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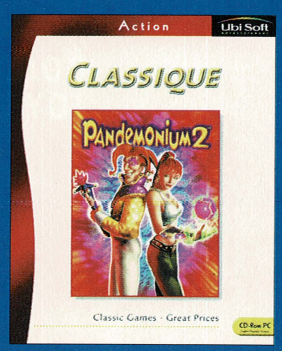
Pandemonium 2



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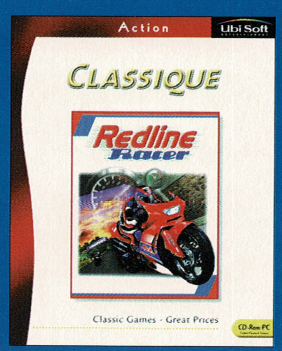
Redline Racer



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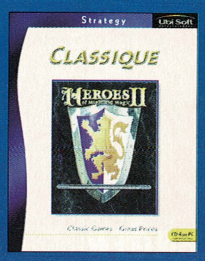
Heroes II



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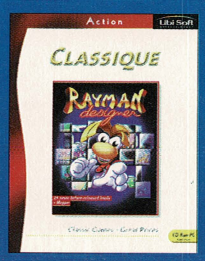
Rayman Designer



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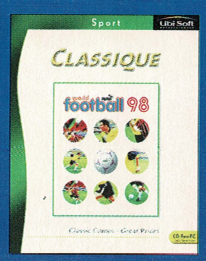
Puma World Football



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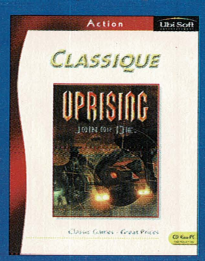
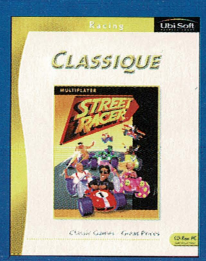
Uprising



£9.99

Street Racer



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Sub Culture

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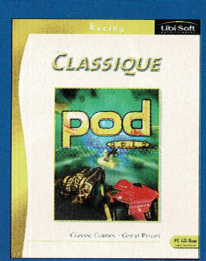
Pod Gold



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Ubi Soft

Hitting the street

Retail's favourite guide to software release information and distributor contacts...

TITLE	FORMAT	GENRE	PUBLISHER	TELEPHONE	DISTRIBUTOR	RELEASE DATE	DEVELOPER
Resident Evil Platinum	PSX	Action	Virgin Interactive	0171 368 2255	Centresoft	October 16th	Capcom
Rushdown	PC/PSX	Action/Strategy	Infogrames	0161 832 6633	Centresoft	October 16th	Canal + Multimedia
Magic & Mayhem	PC	Strategy	Virgin Interactive	0171 368 2255	Centresoft	October 16th	Mythos Games
Constructor	PSX	Strategy	Acclaim	0171 344 5000	Open	October 16th	Acclaim
R-Types	PSX	Arcade	Virgin Interactive	0171 368 2255	Centresoft	October 16th	Irem
3D Ultra Pinball 3 (S.O.)	PC	Arcade	Cendant	0118 920 9100	Gauntlet	October 16th	Sierra
Phantasmagoria 2 (S.O.)	PC	Adventure	Cendant	0118 920 9100	Gauntlet	October 16th	Sierra
Casino Deluxe(S.O.)	PC	Family Games	Cendant	0118 920 9100	Gauntlet	October 16th	Sierra
Madden NFL '99	N64/PC	Sports	EA	01753 549442	Pinnacle	October 16th	EA San Mateo
Xcom Apocalypse (Powerplus)	PC	Strategy	Microprose	01454 893 893	Pinnacle	October 16th	Mythos Games
Rainbow Six	PC	Action	Take 2	01753 854 444	Centresoft	October 16th	Redstorm
C3 Racing	PSX	Racing	Infogrames	0161 832 6633	Centresoft	October 16th	Eutechnyx
Victory Boxing 2	PSX	Fighting	Virgin Interactive	0171 368 2255	Centresoft	October 16th	JVC
Game of Life	PC	Board	Hasbro	0171 490 1323	Centresoft	October 16th	Hasbro
Monopoly	GB	Board	Konami	01895 853000	Open	October (Mid)	Sculptured Software
1080 Snowboarding	N64	Racing	Nintendo	01703 653377	THE Games	October (Mid)	Nintendo
Baseball 2000	PC	Sports	Interplay	01628 423666	Centresoft	October (Mid)	VR Sports
Magic the Gathering	PC	Strategy	Microprose	01454 893 893	Pinnacle	October (Mid)	Microprose
Caesers Slots	PC	Sim	Interplay	01628 423666	Centresoft	October (Mid)	Runecraft
Caesers World Gambling	PC	Sim	Interplay	01628 423666	Centresoft	October (Mid)	Runecraft
Civ 2 (Powerplus)	PC	Strat.	Microprose	01454 893 893	Pinnacle	October (Mid)	Microprose
F1 GP2 (Powerplus)	PC	Racing	Microprose	01454 893 893	Pinnacle	October (Mid)	Microprose
Actua Tennis	PSX/PC	Sports	Gremlin	0114 263 9900	Open	October 21st	Gremlin
Bomberman Hero	N64	Action	Nintendo	01703 653377	THE Games	October 23rd	Hudsonsoft
Actua Golf 3	PSX	Sports	Gremlin	0114 263 9900	Open	October 21st	Gremlin
Pocket Fighter	PSX	Fighting	Virgin Interactive	0171 368 2255	Centresoft	October 23rd	Capcom
Megaman x4	PSX	Arcade	Virgin Interactive	0171 368 2255	Centresoft	October 23rd	Capcom
Megaman Legends	PSX	Arcade	Virgin Interactive	0171 368 2255	Centresoft	October 23rd	Capcom
Ninja	PSX	Action	Eidos	0181 636 3000	Centresoft	October 23rd	Core
Newman Haas Racing	PC	Racing	Psygnosis	0151 282 3000	Centresoft	October 23rd	Studio 33
Knights and Merchants	PC	Strategy	Int. Magic	01344 409399	Open	October 23rd	Int. Magic
Wing Prophecy Gold	PC	Sim	EA	01753 549442	Pinnacle	October 23rd	Origin
Liath	PC	Adventure	Black Friar	0171 579 4106	Gauntlet	October 23rd	Amber
War of the Worlds	PC	Strategy	GT Interactive	0171 258 3791	Open	October 25th	Rage
Dark Vengeance	PC	Adventure/Strat	GT Interactive	0171 258 3791	Open	October 25th	Reality Bites
Arcade Classics 2	PC	Retro Arcade	GT Interactive	0171 258 3791	Open	October 25th	Williams
Off Road Challenge	PSX	Racing	GT Interactive	0171 258 3791	Open	October 25th	Williams
B-Movie	PSX	Action	GT Interactive	0171 258 3791	Open	October 25th	King of the Jungle
Unreal Level Editor	PC	Editor	GT Interactive	0171 258 3791	Open	October 25th	Epic Megagames
Trans Am Racing	PC	Racing	GT Interactive	0171 258 3791	Open	October 25th	EAI
Hordes	PC	Strategy	GT Interactive	0171 258 3791	Open	October 25th	System 3
Actua Soccer 3	PSX/PC	Sports	Gremlin	0114 263 9900	Open	October 28th	Gremlin
Formula 1 '98	PSX	Racing	Psygnosis	0151 282 3000	Centresoft	October 30th	Visual Sciences
O.D.T.	PC/PSX	Action	Psygnosis	0151 282 3000	Centresoft	October 30th	Psygnosis - Paris Studio
Tenchu	PSX	Action/Stealth	Activision	01895 456 736	Centresoft	October 30th	Studio X, Japan
Nascar '99	N64	Racing	EA	01753 549 442	Pinnacle	October 30th	EA San Mateo, USA
Settlers 3	PC	Strategy	Blue Byte	01604 232200	Centresoft	October 30th	Blue Byte

A to Z

1080 Snowboarding	October (Mid)
3D Ultra Pinball 3 (S.O.)	October 16th
Actua Golf 3	October 21st
Actua Soccer 3	October 28th
Actua Tennis	October 21st
Arcade Classics 2	October 25th
Baseball 2000	October (Mid)
B-Movie	October 25th
Bomberman Hero	October 23rd
C3 Racing	October 16th
Caesers Slots	October (Mid)
Caesers World Gambling	October (Mid)
Casino Deluxe (S.O.)	October 16th
Civ 2 (Powerplus)	October(Mid)
Constructor	October 16th
Dark Vengeance	October 25th
F1 GP2 (Powerplus)	October(Mid)
Formula 1 '98	October 30th
Game of Life	October 16th
Hordes	October 25th
Knights and Merchants	October 23rd
Liath	October 23rd
Madden NFL '99	October 16th
Magic & Mayhem	October 16th
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Megaman Legends	October 23rd
Megaman x4	October 23rd
Monopoly	October(Mid)
Nascar '99	October 30th
Newman Haas Racing	October 23rd
Ninja	October 23rd
O.D.T.	October 30th
Off Road Challenge	October 25th
Phantasmagoria 2 (S.O.)	October 16th
Pocket Fighter	October 23rd
Rainbow Six	October 16th
Resident Evil Platinum	October 16th
R-Types	October 16th
Rushdown	October 16th
Settlers 3	October 30th
Tenchu	October 30th
Trans Am Racing	October 25th
Unreal Level Editor	October 25th
Victory Boxing 2	October 16th
War of the Worlds	October 25th
Wing Prophecy Gold	October 23rd

WHOLESALE CONTACTS

DISTRIBUTOR	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE	FAX
Aashima Distribution	Waterside Bus. Park, Eastways, Whittam, Essex, CM8 3YQ	01376 500 770	01376 518 780
Alternative Software Ltd	5-7 Bailey Gate Industrial Estate, Pontefract, West Yorkshire, WF8 2LN	01977 797777	01977 790243
Bizarre Love Triangle	2 The Courtyard, Denmark St., Wokingham, Berks, RG40 2AZ	0118 9787443	0118 9787448
Budget UK	150 Chorley Old Road, Bolton, BL1 3AT	01204 846301	01204 492595
CD Imports	Grovebury Farm, Grovebury Road, Leighton Buzzard, Beds. LU7 8TF	01525 374747	01525 372888
CD Rom Distribution	Mowbray House, Mowbray St, Stockport, Cheshire, SK1 3EJ	0161 4774235	0161 477 5687
CD Wholesale	18 Wharside, Nenny,Stratford, Milton Keynes, MK2 2AZ	01908 371672	01908 371680
Centresoft	Units 4&5, Holford Way, Holford, Birmingham B6 7AX	0121 625 7106	0121 344 4443
Computer Bookshops	205 Foremans Road, Spark Hill, Birmingham, B11 3AX	0121 778 3333	0121 606 0469
Computer Warehouse	1 Amalgamated Drive, West Cross Center, Great West Road, Brentford, TW8 9EZ	0181 400 1234	0181 400 9444
Entertainment UK	243 Blyth Road, Hayes, Middx, UB3 1DN	0181 8487511	0181 573 5227
Fire International	NACAP House, 46-48 Silver St, Doncaster, DN1 1HT	01302 325225	01302 322 061
Futuretech Distribution	289 Padiham Road, Burnley BB12 0HA	01282 436422	01282 436488
Gauntlet Entertainment	Talon House, Presley Way, Crownhill, Milton Keynes, MK8 0EE	01908 575600	01908 564587
Gem Distribution Ltd	Lovett Road, The Pinnacles, Harlow, Essex, CM19 5TB	01279 822 822	01279 412604
Golding Products	Unit 24, Hortonwood 33, Telford, TF1 4EX	01952 606667	01952 670267
Guildsoft	The Software Centre, East Way, Lee Mill Ind. Estate, Ivy Bridge, Devon, PL19 GPE	01752 895100	01752 894833
Ingram Micro (UK)	Garamonde Drive, Wymbush, Milton Keynes, Bucks, MK8 8DF	01908 260422	01908 265526
Interactive Ideas	Unit 2, Centenary Estate, Centenary Road, Enfield, Middx, EN3 7UF	0181 805 1000	0181 805 8962
Koch Media Ltd	Hamps. Int. Business Park, Crockford Lane, Chineham, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG24 8WH	01256 707767	01256 707377
Lazer Distribution	Unit 2, Kingsgate Business Unit, Heathpark Ind. Estate, Honiton, Devon, EX14 8YD	01404 46660	01404 46661
LDA Distribution	12 Firbank Way, Chartwell Bus. Park, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 8FL	01525 852900	01525 854358
Lightwave	Unit 18, Wirral Bus. Center, Dock Road, Birkenhead, L41 1JW	0151 6305003	0151 630 6237
Micro Peripherals	1 Linden Wood, Chineham, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG24 8QY	01256 707070	01256 707505
Peanut Distribution	33-36 Singleton St., Swansea, SA9 3QW	01792 462262	01792 461664
Pinnacle	The Teardrop Centre, London Road, Swanley, Kent BR8 8TS	01322 665652	01322 619259
Planet Distribution	170 Brooker Road, Waltham Abbey, Essex, EN9 1JH	01992 707 400	01992 707 401
Playware	23a High Street, Rushden, Northants, NN10 OQE	019033 396596	01933 396597
Prism Leisure	Unit 1, Baird Road, Enfield, Middx, EN1 1SJ	0181 804 8100	0181 805 8001
Quicksilver	Unit 5-7 Baileygate Ind. Estate, Pontifract, W.Yorkshire, WF8 2LN	01977 600888	01977 790243
RSD Connections	Mead Business Centre, Mead Lane, Hertford, SG13 7AG	01992 584205	01992 584207
T.H.E Games	Parham Drive, Boyatt Wood, Eastleigh, Hampshire SO50 4NU	0990 000064	0990 006644
T.H.E	Rosevale Business Park, Newcastle Under Lyme, Staffordshire ST5 7QT	01782 566511	01782 565400
Telegames	Kilby Bridge, Wigston, Leicester, LE18 3TE	01162 880445	0116 2813437
Telstar Distribution	Units 3-4, Northgate Bus. Centre, Crown Road, Enfield, Middx, EN1 1TG	0181 805 7788	0181 805 9210
Videogames	25 Cromwell Court, Ealing Road, Alperton, Middx, HA0 1JT	0181 998 6555	0181 998 5491
XMA	Willford Ind. Estate, Ruddington Lane, Nottingham, NG11 7EP	0115 981 8222	0115 981 0180

Website Guide

Aashima Distribution www.Trust-site.com
CD Imports www.cdimports.com
CD-Rom Distribution www.cdromd.com
Centresoft www.centresoft.co.uk
Computer 2000 www.computer2000.co.uk
Computer Cave www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~ccave/
Enta Technologies www.enta.co.uk
Fairline Distribution www.fairline.com
Fire International www.blaze.de
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Peanut Distribution www.mmexp.co.uk
Principal Distribution www.principal.co.uk
Spectravideo www.spectravideo.com
THE Games www.the.co.uk
XMA www.unet.com/xma

YOUR KEY TO OUR WEEKLY PRODUCT GUIDE

What is an Order Tip?

A complete evaluation service for retailers. As a product goes into pre-sales, Order Tips will summarise every important aspect of the title's release, so that the product is fully understood by retailers and can therefore be more accurately ordered.

It is not MCV's intention to 'make' or 'break' a product. Nor do we attempt to 'review' the product in the same sense as the specialist press would.

Product Information

A summary of the game, including the game style, the number of players and the game's main features. We will also look at the title's overall quality - paying particular attention to the game's positive points, which would be most attractive to purchasers.

Reviews

Specialist press reviews, as provided by the product's publishers.

Marketing Support

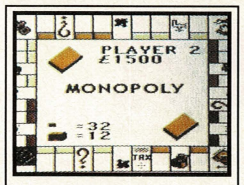
A quick guide to the TV, radio, print, P.O.S. and other marketing muscle supporting the product.

Special Information

- Indicates that MCV considers the product particularly suitable for in-store display.
- 15 The voluntary or BBFC rating, where known.
- L Indicates that the game has a license attached to it. The arrow points upwards if the license adds value at retail, down if not.
- FP The letters FP indicates a full-price release. BC indicates a back-catalogue release.

Sales Potential

The game's likely performance once released. This section takes into account the game's genre, competition, pricepoint, marketing support, overall quality and press reviews.



Monopoly

GENERAL INFORMATION

Game Boy

Genre: Boardgame
Developer: Sculptured Software
Publisher: Konami
Street date: October 16
Estimated street price: £19.99

PRODUCT INFORMATION 4/linkup

Konami's conversion of the classic boardgame has obvious appeal. No arguments about who has to be the bank, no plastic hotels for dogs to swallow and every opportunity to play Monopoly in the back seat of the car. Clever support of the linkup cable means up to eight can play one game.

REVIEWS

MARKETING SUPPORT

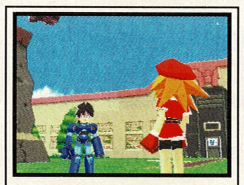
P.O.S. Posters and dummy boxes

SPECIAL INFORMATION

3 L FP

SALES POTENTIAL

Hasbro has sold over a million copies of Monopoly on PC and PlayStation. Konami must be banking on similar success on the Game Boy.



Mega Man Legends

GENERAL INFORMATION

PlayStation

Genre: Action/RPG
Developer: Capcom
Publisher: Virgin
Street date: October 23
Estimated street price: £39.99

PRODUCT INFORMATION 1 player

After more than a decade, Capcom's hero Mega Man stumbles into 3D. The gameplay has grown up too, with Capcom incorporating RPG elements into the basic formula. The control method and camera has been criticised by some though, and Mega Man Legends is definitely not a title for the casual gamer.

REVIEWS

MARKETING SUPPORT

Print Specialist press ads

P.O.S. Flyers

SPECIAL INFORMATION

3 FP

SALES POTENTIAL

Updating Mega Man this late in the day probably won't be sufficient to see the series shrug off its tired 16-bit overtones. Don't expect anything special.

O.D.T.

GENERAL INFORMATION

PlayStation

Genre: Action/Adventure
Developer: Psygnosis
Publisher: Psygnosis
Street date: October 30
Estimated street price: £39.99

PRODUCT INFORMATION 1 player

A very attractive attempt to bring RPG elements to Tomb Raider / Deathtrap Dungeon. Players choose between four different characters, each with their own special moves. There are also 16 spells to learn. Despite the Paris studios' best efforts, the atmosphere isn't frightening as, say, Resident Evil.

REVIEWS

MARKETING SUPPORT

Print Specialist and consumer press ads

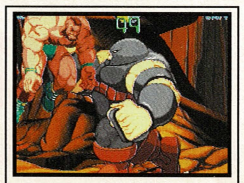
Misc 'Underground' club vibe to campaign - fly-posting, Web ads, ads with different takes on the letters 'O.D.T.'

SPECIAL INFORMATION

FP

SALES POTENTIAL

Like many Psygnosis products, this is a pretty and extremely well animated game, which will doubtless attract more punters than the innovative gameplay.



X-Men Vs Street Fighter

GENERAL INFORMATION

PlayStation

Genre: Fighting
Developer: Capcom
Publisher: Virgin
Street date: October 30
Estimated street price: £39.99

PRODUCT INFORMATION 2 players

Surely the last time Capcom will release a 2D fighting game on the PlayStation. Yes, it's based on Capcom's proven fluid fighting system and the inclusion of eight X-Men characters amongst the 17 fighters on offer will draw a few punters. But the game was undoubtedly better both in the arcade and on Saturn.

REVIEWS

MARKETING SUPPORT

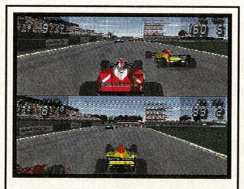
Print Ads in the specialist PlayStation press

SPECIAL INFORMATION

3 L FP

SALES POTENTIAL

If it was a truly brilliant game, it might stand some chance against the mighty Tekken 3, which has surely sated most gamers' appetites for violence. Will appeal mostly to die-hard fans.



Formula 1 '98

GENERAL INFORMATION

PlayStation

Genre: Driving
Developer: Visual Sciences
Publisher: Psygnosis
Street date: October 30
Estimated street price: £44.99

PRODUCT INFORMATION 2 players

Having parted company with Bizzare Creations, who created Psygnosis' previous wildly successful Formula 1 racing games, this title marks an important juncture for the series. Good points include excellent commentary from ITV's Walker and Brundle team, a dashboard display and 4-player linkup.

REVIEWS

MARKETING SUPPORT

TV Psygnosis' biggest ever television campaign

Radio Confirmed, but no details available

Print Consumer and specialist press, newspapers

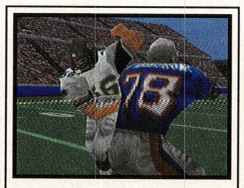
Misc Billboard ads

SPECIAL INFORMATION

3 L FP

SALES POTENTIAL

While the game itself has wobbled a little, the brilliant official licence deal, the timely release date and a massive marketing campaign will see this title fly off the shelves despite stiff competition.



Madden NFL '99

GENERAL INFORMATION

N64

Genre: Sports
Developer: Electronic Arts
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Street date: October 16
Estimated street price: £39.99

PRODUCT INFORMATION 2 players

Madden NFL '99 includes over 100 past and present NFL teams, all 30 current teams and the 85 all-time greatest teams. Aside from its statistical muscle, Madden also offers solid gameplay, and a simpler interface for beginners. The final temptation is live footage of the big man himself in the commentary booth. A stunning game for American football fans.

REVIEWS

MARKETING SUPPORT

Print PR support targetting games press

SPECIAL INFORMATION

3 L FP

SALES POTENTIAL

An excellent title without much competition on the N64 - at least until Acclaim's NFL Quarterback Club '99 arrives. But fans of the sport are in short supply in the UK, so order accordingly.

Bomberman Hero

GENERAL INFORMATION

N64

Genre: Platform
Developer: Hudson Soft
Publisher: THE
Street date: October 23
Estimated street price: £39.99

PRODUCT INFORMATION 1 player

Bomberman makes quite a succesful transition to the 3D platforming realm, although the odd perspectives sometimes makes it difficult to judge jumps. More problematic is the basic concept. Bomberman Hero isn't as frantic as the previous speedy multiplayer incarnations and it's not as well paced as a true platformer like Banjo-Kazooie or Mario 64.

REVIEWS

MARKETING SUPPORT

Print Ads in Nintendo press

P.O.S. Posters, dummy boxes

SPECIAL INFORMATION

11 FP

SALES POTENTIAL

There's nothing particularly wrong with Bomberman Hero - it's a quintessentially average release. It's not likely to stack up against the triple-A N64 releases that are coming up shortly.

Newman Hass Racing

GENERAL INFORMATION

PC

Genre: Driving
Developer: Studio 33
Publisher: Psygnosis
Street date: October 23
Estimated street price: £34.99

PRODUCT INFORMATION 2/network

Do our Formula 1 games seem as unappealing to the Americans? Like the PlayStation version of Newman Hass, this isn't a bad racing game, but it's not a classic either. Basically, it's the old F1 '97 engine with 14 top Indy drivers and 11 licensed tracks bolted on top. Could appeal to gamers tired of reliving their Damon Hill fantasies.

REVIEWS

MARKETING SUPPORT

Print Ads in motoring and gaming press

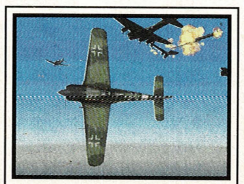
Misc Demo placement with PC press

SPECIAL INFORMATION

3 L FP

SALES POTENTIAL

Psygnosis can't expect to sell as many copies of this racing game here in the UK as it will Stateside, especially considering the current competition. Nor should retail.



European Air War

GENERAL INFORMATION

PC

Genre: Flight sim
Developer: MicroProse
Publisher: MicroProse
Street date: October 30
Estimated street price: £34.99

PRODUCT INFORMATION 1/network

Historical accuracy would be expected from the team who produced MicroProse's Pacific Air War. The campaign creator is perhaps their best achievement though, weaving historically-based missions into a random career path. Over 20 planes from WW2 can be flown, and there's a choice between The Battle of Britain or 1943 campaigns.

REVIEWS

MARKETING SUPPORT

Print Games press, cinema magazines, aviation press

P.O.S. Posters, flyers, demos and dummy boxes

Misc Direct mail to flight sim database

SPECIAL INFORMATION

11 FP

SALES POTENTIAL

A timely update to the historical flight sim. Microsoft's Combat Flight Simulator will be out at the end of November, however, so the first weeks will be crucial.

The Chosen: Blood 2

GENERAL INFORMATION

PC

Genre: First-person shooter
Developer: Monolith
Publisher: GT Interactive
Street date: October 30
Estimated street price: £34.99

PRODUCT INFORMATION 1/network

Back when GTi ruled the first-person roost with id Software, it had Blood. Published by Eidos in the UK, Blood failed to wow the reviewers but it won a cult following - even more so in the US. The sequel finds GT running with Epic instead of Id, but the big picture hasn't changed. Unreal is much better than Blood II, but the latter does its own thing adequately.

REVIEWS

MARKETING SUPPORT

Print Extensive trade and specialist press campaign with three months of DPS ads in all major PC mags.

P.O.S. A2 posters, over-sized boxes, sales sheets

Misc Direct mail to GTi's Unreal/Quake database

SPECIAL INFORMATION

18 FP

SALES POTENTIAL

Blood 2 isn't in the same league as GTi's other shooter Unreal nor Cendant's stellar Half-life. Sales won't be either.

ALL FORMATS TOP 40 LEISURE SOFTWARE

Every week MCV will bring you an at-a-glance guide to the UK market's top-selling titles, courtesy of ChartTrack and ELSPA

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	LABEL	FORMAT
1	1	TEKKEN 3	NAMCO/SONY	PLAYSTATION
2	2	F1 WORLD GRAND PRIX	NINTENDO	N64
3	3	MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE	OCEAN/INFOGRAMES	N64
4	4	TOCA TOURING CAR	CODEMASTERS	PLAYSTATION, PC
22	5	ISS '98	CODEMASTERS	PL, N64
7	6	C&C RETALIATION	WESTWOOD STUDIOS	PLAYSTATION
14	7	ODD WORLD: ABE'S ODDYSEE	ODDWORLD/GTI	PLAYSTATION, PC
NEW	8	DUNE 2000	WESTWOOD/EA	PLAYSTATION
6	9	COLIN MCRAE RALLY	CODEMASTERS	PLAYSTATION
11	10	GRAN TURISMO	SCEE	PLAYSTATION
9	11	PREMIER MANAGER '98	GREMLIN	PLAYSTATION, PC
8	12	TOMB RAIDER 2	EIDOS INTERACTIVE	PLAYSTATION, PC
10	13	V RALLY	INFOGRAMES	PLAYSTATION, GA
5	14	WWF: WARZONE	ACCLAIM	PL, N64, GA
12	15	WORLD CUP '98	EA/THQ	PL, PC, N64, GA
13	16	TOMB RAIDER	EIDOS INTERACTIVE	PL, SA, PC
13	17	CRASH BANDICOOT	SCEE	PLAYSTATION
26	18	FORMULA 1 '97	PSYGNOSIS	PC, PLAYSTATION
33	19	THEME HOSPITAL	ELECTRONIC ARTS	PC, PLAYSTATION
19	20	TEKKEN 2	SCEE	PLAYSTATION
16	21	RESIDENT EVIL 2	VIRGIN	PLAYSTATION
20	22	MORTAL KOMBAT 4	GT/WILLIAMS	PLAYSTATION, N64
24	23	FIA FORMULA 1	PSYGNOSIS	PLAYSTATION, PC
21	24	COMMANDOS	EIDOS INTERACTIVE	PC
18	25	BANJO KAZOOIE	NINTENDO	N64
17	26	DIE HARD TRILOGY	EA/FOX INTERACTIVE	PL, PC, SA
25	27	RAYMAN	UBI SOFT	PC, PLAYSTATION
23	28	GRAND THEFT AUTO	TAKE 2 INTERACTIVE	PC, PLAYSTATION
RE	29	COMMAND & CONQUER	VIRGIN INTERACTIVE	PC, PLAYSTATION
27	30	QUAKE II: GROUND ZERO	ACTIVISION	PC
31	31	MICRO MACHINES V3	CODEMASTERS	PC, PLAYSTATION
28	32	THEME PARK	EA/BULLFROG/ACID	PC, PL, AG
29	33	SPICE WORLD	SCEE	PLAYSTATION
36	34	WORMS	OCEAN/TEAM 17	PL, GA, SA, MD
40	35	TITANIC	EUROPRESS	PC
32	36	C&C RED ALERT	VIRGIN INTERACTIVE	PC, PLAYSTATION
RE	37	NEED FOR SPEED 3	ELECTRONIC ARTS	PC, PLAYSTATION
37	38	ACTUA GOLF 2	GREMLIN INTERACTIVE	PC, PLAYSTATION
38	39	TR: UNFINISHED BUSINESS	EIDOS INTERACTIVE	PC
34	40	CROC	EA/FOX INTERACTIVE	PLAYSTATION, PC, SA

Market Breakdown

THE MARKET'S PERFORMANCE FOR THE WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 3RD

MARKET BY UNITS	WEEKLY % CHANGE	MARKET SHARE
Total Market	**Up 12%**	-
Full Price Console	Up 5%	33%
Full Price Home Computer	Up 17%	32%
Budget Console	Up 13%	19%
Budget Home Computer	Up 17%	16%

MARKET BY VALUE	WEEKLY % CHANGE	MARKET SHARE
Total Market	**Up 10%**	-
Full Price Console	Up 4%	44%
Full Price Home Computer	Up 15%	37%
Budget Console	Up 13%	13%
Budget Home Computer	Up 20%	6%

Nintendo 64

1	F1 WORLD GRAND PRIX
2	MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE
3	BANJO-KAZOOIE
4	ISS '98
5	WWF: WARZONE
6	MORTAL KOMBAT 4
7	GOLDENEYE 007
8	MARIO KART 64
9	WAIALAE GOLF CLASSICS
10	SUPER MARIO 64
11	WORLD CUP '98
12	DIDDY KONG RACING
13	YOSHI'S STORY 64
14	LYLAT WARS
15	GT 64
16	EXTREME G
17	ALL STAR BASEBALL '99
18	SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE
19	SNOWBOARD KIDS
20	WAVERACE

PC CD-Rom: Full Price

1	DUNE 2000
2	COMMANDOS
3	QUAKE II: GROUND ZERO
4	PREMIER MANAGER '98
5	TITANIC
6	AGE OF EMPIRES
7	WORLD CUP '98
8	NEED FOR SPEED 3
9	C&C: RED ALERT
10	CHAMP. MANAGER '97/'98
11	CREATURES 2
12	X-FILES: THE GAME
13	TOTAL AIR WAR
14	ENCARTA '98 SUITE
15	BLADERUNNER
16	UNREAL
17	QUAKE 2
18	WORMS 2
19	TOMB RAIDER 2
20	MYST

PlayStation

1	TEKKEN 3
2	TOCA TOURING CAR
3	C&C RETALIATION
4	COLIN MCRAE RALLY
5	GRAN TURISMO
6	ISS PRO '98
7	ABE'S ODDYSEE
8	V RALLY
9	TOMB RAIDER
10	TOMB RAIDER 2
11	CRASH BANDICOOT
12	PREMIER MANAGER '98
13	TEKKEN 2
14	RESIDENT EVIL 2
15	FORMULA 1 '97
16	WWF: WARZONE
17	FIA FORMULA 1
18	DIE HARD TRILOGY
19	WORLD CUP '98
20	RAYMAN

Console: Full Price

1	TEKKEN 3
2	F1 WORLD GRAND PRIX
3	MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE
4	ISS PRO '98
5	C&C RETALIATION
6	COLIN MCRAE RALLY
7	GRAN TURISMO
8	WWF: WARZONE
9	TOMB RAIDER 2
10	PREMIER MANAGER '98
11	WORLD CUP '98
12	RESIDENT EVIL 2
13	MORTAL KOMBAT 4
14	FORMULA 1 '97
15	BANJO-KAZOOIE
16	POINT BLANK
17	GRAND THEFT AUTO
18	ASSAULT
19	GOLDENEYE 007
20	MADDEN NFL '99

ChartTrack

ELSPA

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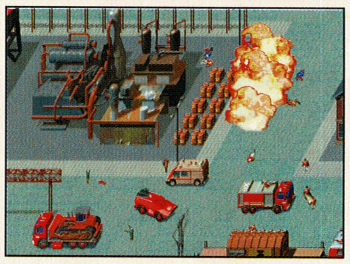
ChartTrack collects sales data from more than 4,000 UK outlets. Supporting retailers include Argos, Asda, Blockbuster, Comet, Currys, Dixons, Electronics Boutique, Game Ltd., HMV, John Menzies, MVC, Our Price, PC World, Staples, Tempo, Virgin, WH Smith, Woolworths and a small selection of independents

Life savers



ASCII has made its debut in the PC sector with the original Emergency: Fighters For Life.

The game offers a new twist to the strategy genre, with gamers co-ordinating the emergency services.

ASCII is duly celebrating its first PC release by offering a free copy to 10 MCV readers.

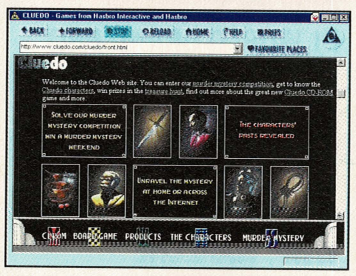
Simply answer the following question and email it to mcvnews@aol.com.

What telephone number should be dialled to reach the emergency services?

Hidden Camera

Meet Nigel Taylor, ad manager of ComputerActive and typical Northerner. The excellent fortnightly will notch a first ABC in excess of 200,000 and a recent TV-supported promo issue sold 350,000. He says he's delighted...and we'd hate to see him when he's miserable.

Sitewatch


CLUEDO - Games from Hasbro Interactive and Hasbro
Cluedo
SOLVE OUR MURDER MYSTERY COMPETITION WIN A MURDER MYSTERY WEEKEND
THE CHARACTERS' PASTS REVEALED
UNRAVEL THE MYSTERY AT HOME OR ACROSS THE INTERNET
CLUEDO BOARD GAME
PRODUCTS
THE CHARACTERS
MURDER MYSTERY

Cluedo

www.cluedo.com

Hasbro's ability to sell board games is renowned, but it's not resting on its laurels.

The Cluedo website's murder mystery competition aims to entertain while promoting both the digital and the 50th anniversary version of the game. Clues emerge weekly and players can take on their friends in personal leagues.

With a design echoing the game itself, Hasbro seems to have cleverly cracked the online promotion puzzle.

Rating 4/5

Wish you knew more about the business? Bluffer's Guide is here to help. This week the apparently not-that-complicated world of sexy computer game graphics..

Bluffer's Guide

No.6 3D Cards

Everyone knows that PC graphics look like something that's been drawn on an Etch-a-Sketch. For real class, superlative rendering and high resolution loveliness you want an N64, mate...

You couldn't be further from the truth. True, PC games did use to look like Aboriginal cave paintings, but these days there's nothing to touch them.

Some horrendously expensive add-on no doubt?

There are some very pricey bits of kit out there, but massive competition and consistently improving performance means that every PC owner can get a slice of the action now.

Every PC owner with a few hundred quid to spare...

Nope. The most expensive pieces of silicon out there, such as those based on the Voodoo 2 chipset, will set you back about £120 but Matrox, ATi or S3 will cheerfully sell you a card for about £60 that offers cutting edge performance.

And what does cutting edge mean, pray tell?

It means bilinear and trilinear filtering, advanced shading, massive pixel and trixel throughput...

Come again?

Instead of blocky pixelated graphics, you get a bloody smooth and bloody colourful display that moves bloody quickly.

Like an N64 then?

No, way beyond anything that little toy can do.

Have a look at Unreal, Urban Assault or Incoming running on a decent 3D graphics card and you'll never be able to look at an N64 or PlayStation title again, without collapsing on the floor in a heap of giggles.

Impressive hardware's all well and good, but are there enough enhanced games out there?

You'd better believe it. Just about every title released within the last 12 months is 3D enhanced and there's already a massive back catalogue of sexy looking games on the scene.

You make these accelerator cards sound like essential purchases?

You're not wrong. To be honest, you'd have to be crazy to want to play PC games in ordinary 2D mode.

And with the things becoming increasingly popular both in the retail channel and at OEM level, the days of the 2D engined game are coming to an end.

Besides, one of these beauties can extend the shelf life of a PC for as much as a year.

You've convinced me, which one should I get?

For raw 3D only performance, the top performer is currently the Voodoo 2 based cards, but for a lot less money, with rendering power right up there with the Voodoo 2 and with state of the art 2D thrown in for good measure, I'd get the Matrox G200 every time.

But if the market's moving that quickly, can't a card be out of date once it's out of the box?

To a certain extent yes, but the quantum leaps have all been made now and advances tend to be at the feature level, rather than the performance end.

I'll take two, and one for the wife.

Sold. Cash or plastic?

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Readership
This is the sixth UK edition of MCV. We publish every Friday, distributing to an initial circulation of 8,000. If your address details are in any way incorrect or you know someone who would like their own copy, please contact MCV@Bastion.co.uk

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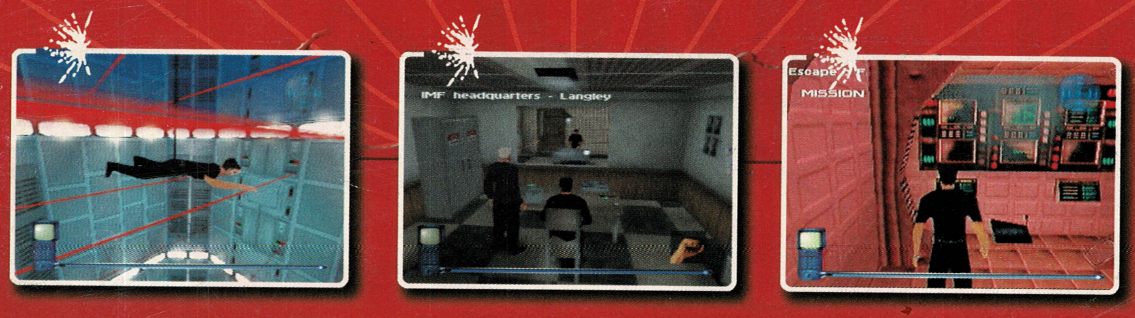

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